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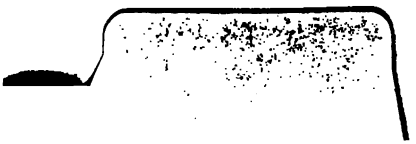

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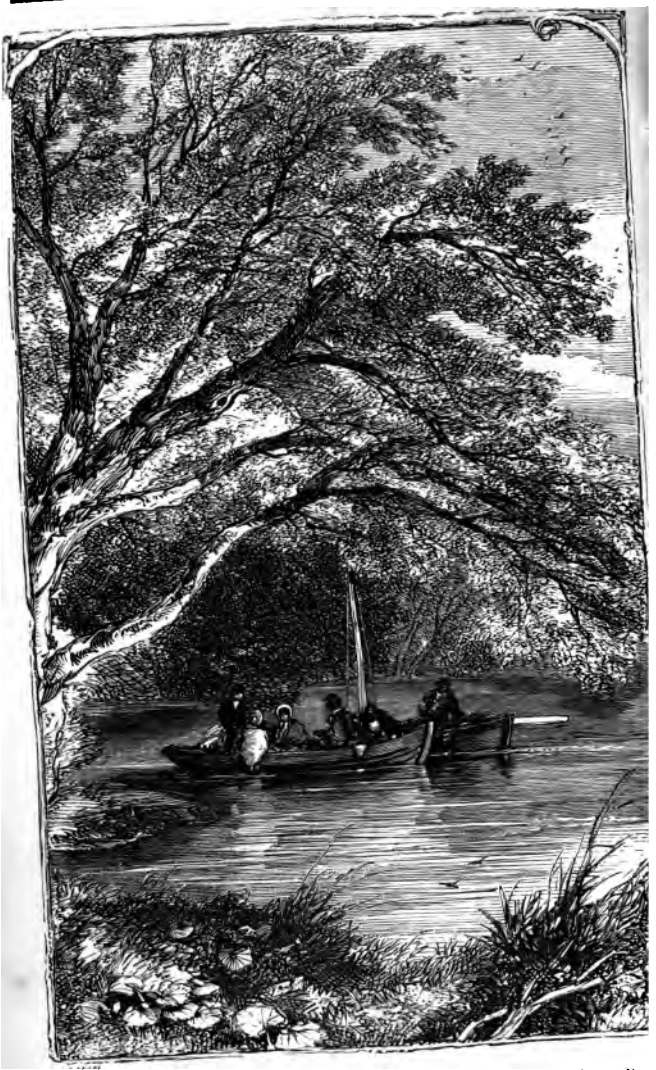

"*Boating took the place of walking in the long summer days.*" Fr

MINNA RAYMOND:

OR,

SELF-SACRIFICE.

A Tale for the Young.

"Our life is but a meeting and a parting,
A glimpse into the world of "might have been."

GERALD MASSEY.

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TO

THE COUNTESS OF CARNARVON.

My dear Lady Carnarvon,

In availing myself of your kind permission to dedicate my little book to you, I cannot but express my regret that it should not be more worthy of such a distinction. Yet I venture to hope that, although in point of composition my work may be of the humblest, there is in the story neither principle nor expression which need make me unwilling to ask for it the sanction of a name which I have so much reason to regard with the most sincere and affectionate respect. I will, therefore, only conclude by thanking you for thus adding to the many favours you have already conferred on

Your gratefully attached,

A. E.

April 15th, 1858.

43X856

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	AN ALTERNATIVE	1
II.	THE FIRST GRIEF	11
III.	MINNA'S HOME	19
IV.	BEATRICE	29
V.	AUNT AND NIECE	41
VI.	PENTYRE	45
VII.	THE NEW YEAR	59
VIII.	HIDE AND SEEK	72
IX.	THE JOURNEY	85
X.	ONCE MORE	91
XI.	PLANS	102
XII.	EASTER	109
XIII.	SUMMER HOURS	124
XIV.	FLITTING	133
XV.	NEW SCENES AND NEW PEOPLE	145
XVI.	TOO BRIGHT TO LAST	151
XVII.	FAIS CE QUE DOIS ADVIENNE QUE POURRA	160
XVIII.	DOUBTS AND DILEMMAS	172
XIX.	LOVE AND DUTY	183
XX.	GUYSBROOKE	195
XXI.	TIME AND TIDE	206
XXII.	A WEEK TOO LATE	219
XXIII.	A FRIEND IN NEED	231
XXIV.	A FRIEND INDEED	241
XXV.	SKETCHES FROM NATURE	251
XXVI.	ABSENT AND PRESENT	262
XXVII.	CLOUDS DISPELLED AT SUNSET	272

MINNA RAYMOND.

CHAPTER I.

AN ALTERNATIVE.

Where there's a will there's a way.

MINNA RAYMOND was the daughter of a gentleman of good family, who, however, was so poor as to be almost unable to maintain the position to which his birth entitled him. The younger son of a younger son, it was only by success in a profession that Mr. Raymond could hope to attain to affluent, or even easy circumstances; but his career had not been a successful one. Having entered the church early in life, in compliance with his father's earnest wishes, he resigned the ministerial office at the age of thirty, in consequence of scruples of conscience, which, while they allowed him still to consider himself a member of the Church of England, made him prefer a private position in the ranks of that Church. He had been married a year before coming to this decision, by which all his earthly prospects were blighted, and had since tried various employments which his friends had with much difficulty obtained for him, but several of which he had been obliged to resign from ill health; and the appointment which he now held was scarcely of suffi-

cient value to enable him to clothe and educate his family properly. He had six children, of whom Minna was the youngest but one; Margaret, the eldest, was fifteen, Harry four years younger, and Minna was three years old when, by the events I am going to relate, she became entitled to a history of her own, separate from that of her sisters and brothers.

Mr. Raymond's eldest brother, who was full twenty years his senior, had married early a lady of large fortune, on whose estates in the north of England he had resided almost entirely, seldom going to London, and only on those rare occasions seeing his younger brother, whom, however, he always met most affectionately, and for whom he had, on more than one occasion, used the influence of his wife's rank and wealth both kindly and successfully. But even of this assistance Mr. Raymond was soon deprived, for his brother died in the prime of life, leaving an only daughter, Honoria, who was only thirteen when her mother married the Earl of St. Melion. Honoria from this time led a very lonely life, her mother frequently leaving her for months with only an elderly governess, who, though very conscientious, was not otherwise suited to be the companion of a solitary child; and often did the remembrance of the little house at King's Holm, where she had sometimes shared the warm welcome always ready for her father, arouse a longing desire for some intercourse with relations who would love her for his sake as well as for her own. Once, indeed, during her first season in London, Honoria contrived to spend a day with her uncle's family, and it was the happiest day she had known for some time, though she was struck almost painfully with the evident

poverty in which they lived, and wished she could help to relieve her aunt from the pressure of cares and anxieties which seemed to weigh down an already delicate constitution.

Honoria was obliged to leave London so soon that she was unable to repeat her visit, but it had served to revive the long hidden attachment to her father's family; and having at the age of twenty become the wife of Lord Fortrose, she made a point of going to see her uncle's family again as soon as she had an opportunity, which, however, was not till a year or more after her marriage. Her husband accompanied her, and a pleasant drive of ten miles out of town brought them to the plain cottage-like dwelling of Mr. Raymond. It was nearly three years since Honoria had seen her uncle and aunt, and Lord Fortrose was quite a stranger to them; but where real kind feeling exists, the restraint of first acquaintance soon wears off, and Mr. Raymond was much pleased with his new nephew; while Honoria, having recalled herself to the recollection of her elder cousins, and been introduced to the baby, whom she had not before seen, was soon listening with great interest to her aunt's account of the family, and of the many plans and contrivances necessary with so many children and so small a house; admiring the careful economy and yet lady-like arrangement apparent there; and winning great favour with the little golden-haired Minna whom she held on her knee.

Then after luncheon Honoria walked with Margaret in the garden, and heard how she and Rhoda taught themselves all they could to save their mamma, who had so much to do; how Minna was forward and

anxious to learn also, and Margaret taught her her letters; but there was no time to do all that should be done for her, mamma was so busy with the baby, and the boys had to be looked after and played with when lessons were done, and Margaret must go out walking with them and Rhoda, lest mischief should happen, and little Minna could not walk so far as they did, and was so often left alone and neglected, Margaret thought. "But if I am at home, she is always with me; she sleeps in my room, and she is in my charge altogether, for mamma said she could not take care of her and Bessie, too. And is not Minna lovely?" added Margaret, warming in the praise of her little favourite; "and will it not be nice to educate her, and see her grow up so clever and so beautiful? She is quite different to Rhoda and the others; I am sure she thinks much more than they did at her age."

Honoria entered with warm interest into Margaret's feelings for the little sister she loved so much, and certainly if Minna differed as much from her sisters in character as she did in appearance, she was singularly unlike them.

Margaret was slight, and rather tall; very pale, with tolerably regular features and dark hair, but she was not pretty. Rhoda, also, who was now eight years old, was dark, and though she had fine hair and good eyes, had no other pretensions to beauty. But Minna, round, rosy, beautifully fair, with large fearless, though well-shaded blue eyes and a profusion of golden hair, of whose wild natural curl Margaret was particularly proud; no wonder Minna was an object of general admiration; she really was a remarkable contrast to the others; the one-year-old baby, Bessie, was fair, it

is true, but she was delicate, and wanted Minna's rosy cheeks and sunny smile; and the boys, though merry-looking and brave, were certainly not handsome.

Margaret's devotion to Minna had, however, a much better foundation than mere vanity. Her mother, always delicate, had from the time of Bessie's birth been almost unable to do more than take care of herself and the sickly child, whom she did not like to leave to a young and inexperienced maid; for this reason Mrs. Raymond had, as Margaret said, confided Minna to her care; and Margaret, who joined with much decision of character strong feelings both of duty and affection, had allowed these to find their centre in Minna, whom she loved with all the depth and concentration of a mind such as hers.

"Margaret is old for her age," Honoria remarked to her husband during their drive home, "and she has a character that would, I am sure, interest me very much, if I knew it better."

"Yes," replied Lord Fortrose, "she is not a common person; indeed, that is a term that cannot be applied to any of the family. I fear, however, that things go hardly with your uncle. Mrs. Raymond and her youngest child are evidently very delicate, and even a doctor's bill must be an extra expense they will find it difficult to meet. Those boys, too, must be an anxiety, now they are of an age to be sent to school. Could we not assist them without hurting Mr. Raymond?"

"I wish we could indeed, and I really think we might. I have a plan already; but as it requires much reflection, I shall not tell you yet what it is."

History tells us not how long Lady Fortrose reflected upon her plan before she divulged it, nor how long she

argued on its merits before she obtained her lord's consent; suffice it to say, that she paid two or three more visits to her uncle's house during the next month, and about a week after one of these visits, during which she had made further progress in the good graces both of Minna and Margaret, Mr. Raymond received a letter, which he read to his wife when the children were gone to bed, when a long and earnest conversation ensued.

"If I were sure it would be for her good," said Mrs. Raymond, "I would say, Yes; and with Honoria I cannot but feel she will be safe; but then, is it good for a child to be separated from her parents? Yet we cannot educate her properly, and Honoria will, and she would not let her forget us; then her sisters—poor Margaret! it will break her heart; but she is working her strength away, striving to do more than she can, and Rhoda and Frank are always upon her, and she will be glad to have poor dear Minna well provided for—yet it does seem so dreadful to let her go, poor darling! There is Bessie, though; I hardly know which way to turn to get proper clothing for them both; and, indeed, when Mr. Watts said in the winter that Bessie ought to be warmly dressed, and go out every day, I went to get them some out-of-doors things, and I saw what would have been the very thing for Bessie; but when I asked the price, it was for her alone, exactly all I had to spend for the two, so I could not get it; and this will go on. What are we to do as they grow older? To rich people one child makes no difference; but to us, where every sixpence is a consideration ——! We cannot run into debt, Francis."

"We must not," said Mr. Raymond; "but can we, or must we sell our child?"

A long silence succeeded this harrowing question. Mrs. Raymond cried bitterly for some time. At last she said—

"If we refuse, shall we not be sacrificing our children's interest to our own feelings? You know it was only yesterday you told me you could not send Harry to school unless we parted with one of the maids. Now, if Minna goes, that can be done. With one child less to watch and work for, Margaret and I could manage without Susan, and Harry can then go."

Still Mr. Raymond was silent. He knew his wife's arguments were reasonable, but he was not weighing them. He was a man who took in the whole of a subject almost at the first glance, and now he saw in Honoria's proposal to adopt Minna, a miserable and humbling alternative, between the sorrow, and doubtful justice, of giving his child away, and the utter impossibility of educating his family without incurring the debts he dreaded. He therefore gave no opinion on his wife's arguments; there was nothing to say. Last night he was at his wit's-end; to-day there was an opening of hope—an offer of help;—if it was not wrong, he must accept it. He prayed for light; he earnestly commended his child to the Father who never would forsake her, and he told his wife to break it to Margaret as soon as she could. Minna must go.

"Minna! Oh! mamma, not Minna! you cannot mean it. Oh! you think so now, but you cannot, you will not do it. What shall we do without her? Do you really mean it, and does papa? I cannot believe it. How can I bear it? Because of being poor? but

poor people keep their children, and are happy, and I will work for her and for all."

"Yes, dear, I know that well, for you do already more than I wish to leave to your share; but, Margaret, a good will may do much, but not all—at least, not always; and you know how difficult we find it to educate any of you as you should be educated, and this is a yet more important consideration than those I have already placed before you."

For Mrs. Raymond had prepared Margaret for the strange news by enumerating all the pecuniary difficulties that surrounded them, ending with the too often vainly-repeated assertion, that "something must be done." "You have, I know, often wished it were possible to give Minna the advantages to which you think she will hereafter do credit, and now the opportunity is offered; all that money can obtain will, you know, be within her reach, and she will be cared for in the best and tenderest way. You can trust her to Honoria, can you not, Margaret?" added Mrs. Raymond, as her daughter remained silent.

Margaret could not speak. Her mother could talk, could reason calmly on parting with a child—yes! for she had others—but Margaret; to her Minna was at once the sunshine and the object of her life—her interest was Margaret's work, her pleasure Margaret's play—she felt as if a dark cloud had suddenly overshadowed her whole future; but there sat her mother awaiting a reply. Margaret looked and saw tears in her eyes. Hastily restraining her own sobs, she murmured—

"I suppose it is right," kissed her mother's cheek, and left the room.

It may be thought strange that in such a case a mother's feelings should not be more painfully acute than those of a sister, but I am only writing the strict truth, and I believe it is more in the character than in the relationship that such differences take their rise.

Mrs. Raymond was an amiable woman, possessing a clear judgment, and a gentle, patient temper; but not a person of deep or intense feeling, and incapable of realizing the force of character and power of loving that lay concealed beneath her daughter's quiet exterior. She knew that Margaret was very fond of Minna, and thought it but natural, as the child was so constantly with her, and so much in her charge; but she did not know or appreciate the strong flow of affection which that deep full heart poured out upon her little darling. Feeling intuitively that her mother had not leisure to enter into and sympathise with her feelings, Margaret had grown gradually into a habit of reserve, rendered the more impenetrable by a calm and equal cheerfulness of manner, which, except in minds well used to the study of character, would have prevented all suspicion that depths yet unexplored lay below. Thus isolated in mind, Margaret had not found, as a child, any object on which to rest the strong desire to love that filled her heart; her mother, though feeling the happiness of spiritual religion herself, was utterly devoid of the capacity of imparting such blessings to her children. She taught her children to serve God, but she could not accustom them to love him. Thus Margaret had felt a want, and longed for an object to fill the void, and Minna had become that long-wished-for blessing, and now she must lose her!

Margaret rushed to her room, and threw herself on her knees by the side of the bed, which she shook with her sobs; she thought over in rapid succession her mother's arguments, which, though she had not paid much attention to them, now returned vividly upon her mind, and she characterised them one after another as mean, base, despicable—not, be it observed, applying these epithets as to motives selected by her mother's free choice, but rather to those suggested by the humbling and fatal necessity which must put such considerations into such a scale.

But in all her sorrow Margaret did not blame Honoria. No, the thought that she had admired and chosen her darling, though the choice was bitter grief, had yet some power to soothe; once only, when she reflected how she herself had praised her little sister, and thereby excited Honoria's interest, she felt almost ready to charge her cousin with deceit, for not at once stating her views with regard to Minna, which views, however, were not then formed.

Margaret was still pondering on these things, when she heard Rhoda's step running towards the room. Margaret rose from her knees, went to the open window, and when Rhoda entered, turned to her a face as calm as usual, and the slightly increased colour in her cheeks was too little apparent to be noticed by the unsuspecting little girl.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST GRIEF.

A child cares nought for gold or treasure,
Nor fame nor glory yield him pleasure;
In perfect trust he asketh not
If rich or poor shall be his lot.

Lyra Germanica.

And oh! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted,
Will it not seem as if the sunny day
Turned from its door away,
While through its chambers wandering wearyhearted
I languish for thy voice, which past me still
Went like a singing rill?

MRS. HEMANS.

THE next few days were passed in the ordinary manner. Margaret had obtained her father and mother's consent that the resolution which so pained her should not immediately be made known to the rest of the family; and as Lady Fortrose had in the most delicate manner possible intimated her desire that no preparations (involving, as she well knew they must, some sacrifice of time or expense) should be made to furnish Minna with any of the requisites to her new position, no increase of occupation interfered to debar Margaret from the transient enjoyment of her little favourite's society. We will not attempt to describe her feelings during this time; those who could share them will want no explanation, and to those who could

not, all explanation would be vain. She required, indeed, all her self-command, to meet calmly the tender and almost deprecating tones with which Honoria greeted her, on the day that was to deprive her of the darling of her heart; but, strange as it may seem, the surrounding influences rather assisted her efforts at composure. Her brothers, thoughtless as boys generally are, and delighted with the acquisition of so kind and liberal a cousin as Lord Fortrose had already proved himself, concerned themselves but little as to the future fate of their pretty little sister; and Rhoda, though more silent and grave than usual, could not but think that Minna was fortunate in being chosen to live where toys and presents seemed to abound, as she had good reason to suppose they did in Honoria's house.

It had been determined by Lord and Lady Fortrose that the all-important visit should be a short one, trying as it could not fail to be; and when, after a somewhat lengthened conversation with Mrs. Raymond, Honoria sought Margaret in her own little room, the latter was so much soothed by the affectionate consideration shown towards her, that the interview, though a sad one, seemed too short when the sound of the carriage-wheels warned them to descend—the one to give up, and the other to receive, a treasure so deeply valued by both.

Minna stood bright and smiling by her mother's side; she had never "heard the name of grief," and the prospect of a drive with her cousin, and a nearer view of the beautiful horses she had admired from the window, was to her one of unmixed pleasure; yet, when Margaret entered the room, the ever wakeful attention of the child was attracted by her sister's unusually saddened countenance, and running up to

The Journey to Pentyre.—P. 13.

her, she asked (though the tears in Margaret's eyes were steady) what she was crying for. Margaret only answered by seizing Minna in her arms, and hurrying her from the room, and Lord Fortrose, who felt for the sister's sorrow a sympathy not unmixed with self-reproach, silently conveyed to Honoria a hint that she should proceed to the carriage without further delay.

Scarcely had she entered it, when Margaret appeared, leading Minna by the hand. She had contrived to hide from the child the cause of her sorrow, lest it should dim those loving blue eyes; and it was with a look of calm, though intensely earnest appeal that she regarded Lord Fortrose, as he lifted Minna in his arms to place her in those of Honoria.

Having done so, he turned once more, and seeing that Margaret was unable to speak, he said,

"I promise all you would ask, dear Margaret, and she shall not forget you." And in another moment Minna had lost sight of the home that was to be hers no more.

For some time Honoria found no difficulty in diverting Minna's attention from thoughts that might lead to a longing for home; she was amused with almost everything they passed on the road, and when at length, wearied with the excitement of her own delight, she fell asleep, Honoria hoped that for that night at least the tired child would, without resistance, allow herself to be laid in the pretty little strange bed prepared for her.

But in this hope she was deceived. Whether sleep had brought dreams of home, or whether it was that with a natural impulse of recovered consciousness the child looked round for her usual protectors, Minna, awaking from her sleep just as they entered London,

asked anxiously for Margaret, and, when she found that her requests to be taken home were evaded, she answered all attempts at consolation by bursting into a passionate fit of crying.

Honoria was both puzzled and distressed by this natural manifestation of feeling. She was very fond of children, and, like many young ladies who profess to be so, got on admirably with them when they were good, but had no idea what to do with a child in a passion. Ardently did she long for the moment when she could resign the sobbing child into the hands of the kind and clever woman whom she had engaged to take charge of her. In the meantime she endeavoured to divert Minna's attention, and at length succeeded in gaining her ear, while she related a story suited to her capacity, not, however, without a feeling of dread lest her stock of such amusements should be exhausted before their arrival in Carlton-terrace. Fortunately Minna's passion had tired her, and she was again fast asleep when the carriage stopped at the door of her new home.

"Poor little thing, she is beautiful certainly, and I don't wonder my lady chose her, but it does seem hard on her mother; no one knows till they have tried it what it costs to part with a child."

And Mrs. Palmer gently seated Minna beside her at the table, hoping that the change which had befallen her, had at any rate not taken away her appetite. But, alas! here was another trouble; it was Margaret that always gave her her tea, and she always sat by Margaret, and Mrs. Palmer saw large tears rolling down the cheeks of the poor little girl she had just been secretly pitying.

She took her on her knee, and asked what she was crying for.

"Margaret!" was the only word that Minna seemed capable of uttering, and it was spoken in so sad a tone that Mrs. Palmer, who had learned from Lady Fortrose the account of the sister's devotion, felt deeply grieved for the child's sorrow; she, however, did not, like Honoria, seek to administer consolation by avoiding the subject of grief, but she immediately began to speak of Margaret as if she also knew and loved her, and quickly guessing at the association of ideas which had revived the too fresh sorrow, she was soon learning from Minna's animated broken English how Margaret took care of her, and was so good to her, and taught her her letters, and replying with comforting assurances to the often-repeated—"Will Margaret come?"

When Lady Fortrose went up to the nursery at half-past eight that evening, she found all quiet, and saw with pleasure the little smiling face, half shaded with golden curls, looking so happy in sleep.

Perhaps she dreamed she was with Margaret.

Mrs. Palmer had much to say in commendation of her little charge; she assured Lady Fortrose that she knew well the difference between tears of sorrow and of temper, and that Minna, whose sorrow gave her favour in her nurse's eyes, certainly had the sweetest of dispositions, and would probably soon get reconciled to her sister's absence if allowed to talk about her as much as she pleased.

But while her little sister was thus forgetting her troubles in the happy sleep of infancy, poor Margaret had a *hard task* at the home from whence the little

sunbeam had been withdrawn. No sooner had the absence of the bright, loving child become a reality to Mrs. Raymond, than she was assailed with doubts as to the prudence and justice of the step to which she had consented; these she did not impart to her husband, for he left the house as soon as Lady Fortrose's carriage was out of sight, and was not seen by any of his family till late in the evening; but Mrs. Raymond had not a mind capable of bearing its burden uncommunicated, and she threw herself on her daughter for sympathy and support, which she received in a helpless, sorrowful manner from one who needed it far more. Is not this often the case? Have we not all seen those who, from the very depth of feeling which adds to the intensity of their grief, draw the power of controlling it, and are expected and enabled to be the comforters of such as feel less, and are less able to endure what they do feel? Such was Margaret's case now. As the evening drew on, the younger children being gone to bed, Mrs. Raymond, who had half forgotten her grief in her cares for them, resumed the often-repeated complaint, that she had not had time to think.

Margaret, who knew that time had had nothing to do with the subject, was obliged to remind her mother of all the good reasons she had herself adduced for giving up the child. Arguing against her own heart, she said all she could think of to prevent the sad feeling of self-reproach which she saw rising in Mrs. Raymond's mind; and while the cry of her conscience was, "I would never have let her go," she earnestly sought to bring her mother to rest on the consciousness of *having* done what both Mr. Raymond and herself

believed to be right in this very difficult and painful case.

Mr. Raymond's return from his long walk was a great relief to Margaret; whether he saw her patient, saddened look, or whether he guessed what her task had been it is impossible to say, but he very kindly advised her to go to bed, adding—

"It is early, but you look tired, dear, and I shall be company for mamma now."

Margaret thankfully took his advice, and once in the solitude of her room, she gave full scope to the long-suppressed burst of sorrow, which would have astonished anybody who was unacquainted with the depth of the apparently still waters of Margaret's soul.

It was a hard struggle to prevent rebellious feelings from gaining the mastery; many a time did the thought recur, "they had no right to send her away," but then came the duty of submission to her father's will, and the remembrance that this must also be willed by her heavenly Father, or He would not have allowed her to be tried with such a trial; and before she fell asleep, Margaret was able to pray with an honest heart that she might be enabled to do her duty to her other sisters and to her brothers, as if they were as dear to her as Minna was.

Happily for Margaret's resolution, many changes followed the one that had rendered it necessary. Harry was sent to a school where he was to be prepared to enter the navy, his darling wish thus appearing in a fair way to be gratified, Lord Fortrose having promised to use his interest in placing him with a most excellent captain, as soon as he should have passed the requisite examinations. *Frank* became the daily pupil (through

Honoria's liberal assistance) of a clergyman who received a limited number of boys, and who lived not more than half a mile from King's Holm.

Rhoda was thus deprived of her usual companions, and was more dependent on Margaret than she had hitherto been, and this was fortunate for both the sisters, for Rhoda was now too old to romp with Frank, and required the elevating and softening influence of an elder sister, and Margaret, who would have been in some danger of dwelling too much on her loss, was soon surprised to find how great an interest Rhoda's improvement was to her; and indeed great as had been her pleasure in teaching Minna the first steps of education, it was quite a new delight to feel the sympathy of an intelligent mind like that of Rhoda, who entered with much zest and energy into the studies in which Margaret delighted, and in which, especially in that of history, she was an admirable assistant to her younger sister.

It was fortunate also that Mrs. Raymond's devotion to her delicate baby, Bessie, did not permit her to devolve that charge upon Margaret, who would in such a case have had too much time for quiet musing while watching the gentle suffering child; feeling, however, that all her mother required was time and leisure for attention to Bessie, Margaret now made it her business to relieve Mrs. Raymond from other cares, and, in so doing, found her reward in the experience that occupation is one of the best cures for grief. But it is not the intention of the author of this story to give a detailed account of Margaret's further life, which will only be noticed when brought into connexion with Minna, and we will therefore pursue our little heroine's *history in the* following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

MINNA'S HOME.

The stately homes of England, how beautiful they stand,
Amidst their tall ancestral trees o'er all the pleasant land!
The deer across their greensward bound through shade and sunny gleam,
And the swan glides past them with the sound of some rejoicing stream.

MRS. HEMANS.

A home
Such as to early thought gives images
The longest treasured and most oft recalled,
And brightest kept of love; a mountain home
That with the murmur of its rocking pines
And sounding waters first in childhood's heart
Wakes the deep sense of nature unto joy.

MRS. HEMANS.

FIVE years had passed since the events alluded to in the last chapter. Minna was now no longer the only child at Pentyre castle. Lady Fortrose's children, Herbert, Winifred, and Geraldine, were, according to their ages, the companions or playfellows of their cousin; nor did their claims in any way interfere with the place that had long been given to Minna in Lady Fortrose's heart. The winning ways of the little girl had deepened and confirmed the impression made at first, we must allow chiefly by her beauty, and, as her home among the Welch mountains enabled Lady Fortrose to devote more time to domestic interests

than she could have given had she resided chiefly in London, Minna had been so much her companion both in the house and out, that at eight years old her mind and conversation were quite equal to those of many children of eleven or twelve. She had seen her sisters generally for a few days in every year during the month that Lady Fortrose spent in London, and from time to time letters in a childish hand, with peculiar orthography, for they were not looked over, gladdened Margaret's constant heart.

But Minna had now become Lady Fortrose's child, if deep love and reverence constitute the feeling of that relationship. Perhaps some people may be inclined to object to the term reverence, as applied to a feeling entertained by so young a child; but certainly Minna's admiration for her aunt, as she was accustomed to call Honoria, partook of that quality. She was very fond of Herbert, her merry, bright-eyed playfellow, who, though four years her junior, seemed to divide his affections pretty equally between her and his twin sister, Winifred, and towards the latter Minna felt and showed all a little elder sister's protecting love. Still, her highest and deepest affection was reserved for Lady Fortrose.

Often had Margaret watched anxiously, during the short visits she was able to pay her little sister, to be quite sure that Minna was really as fond of her cousin as she seemed to be. Jealously, too, did she observe the advances made by Winifred, to see if Minna's place or privileges were encroached upon; and it was with a sort of regretful satisfaction that she confessed to herself that Minna's adopted home left nothing to be wished, no shadow for an excuse to ask for her back

again, had that been possible. It was indeed a very happy home; one of those beautiful places, beautiful both by nature and cultivation, which, when owned and inhabited, as in the present instance, by people who appreciate them, are perhaps among the very best places to educate a strong character for a happy life.

Surely, a happy life, or a few happy pages in the chapter of life, are what we have a right to look for. Is it not a mistake to think that the lives of Christians must be only a life of trouble? Though roses have thorns, yet their sweetness is not undervalued in consequence, and at Pentyre there were many roses, both real and metaphorical, and the thorns, thanks to Lord and Lady Fortrose, were carefully kept out of Minna's way.

The scenery around Pentyre, embracing that grand variety of wood, rock, and sea rarely to be met with except in Wales, early developed in Minna's mind an admiration of, and delight in, the beautiful, which blended itself with a warm attachment to the lovely country in which she was brought up, and infused a strong element of poetry into her character. She tried to cultivate in Herbert a similar enthusiasm for his beautiful home, but in this she was unsuccessful, for Herbert was decidedly matter-of-fact. He was fond of his home, because it was home, but did not appear conscious that it possessed any striking advantages, and considered a mountain only in the light of a hill called by a longer name—perhaps because it was a very high hill. From this state of deplorable indifference he was indeed once roused, when, on making his *début* at Eton, in his twelfth year, he was taken by his father to see Windsor Castle, and informed that the view from the

terrace was one of the most extensive in England. Herbert's remarks on the prospect were not complimentary, he found the country all around so much too flat; and Minna began to hope he was learning to appreciate the mountains, when he wrote word that a hill or two would improve the looks of the place very much.

But I am anticipating, and must now go back to a period two years before this, when Pentyre Castle was deserted, and all the family were in London.

Minna was now nearly fourteen, but she was tall, and looked older. Winifred was her constant companion, and though scarcely ten years old, was quite able to be all that the word companion implies. They learned together of the same masters, and as Lady Fortrose restricted Minna's holiday reading, to children's books, properly so called, the two cousins entered warmly into the fate, circumstances, and characters of many a favourite hero and heroine of fiction, frequently referring a difficulty to Lady Fortrose, who encouraged these conversations, which drew out the feelings, and often showed the natural bias of each character, thereby assisting her in training them, while she always avoided dictating an opinion, and encouraged the ardent little girls to form their own judgment on the highest principles.

Since Winifred had been old enough to join Minna in the school-room, Lady Fortrose had generally left them both in the country when she went to London for a few weeks every year; but this time a family event had called them all to town earlier than usual. Margaret was to be married, and Minna and Winifred were to be her bridesmaids. It was arranged that

Minna should spend the last week before the marriage, with the family at King's Holm, as the sisters were likely to be separated for a long time. Margaret was going to India. Captain Maitland belonged to the Bengal Cavalry, and they were to sail within three months after the marriage, the intervening time being spent chiefly in visits to his relations in Scotland.

Minna was therefore once more to share Margaret's little room. That room could have told of many prayers and tears on her account, and even now she had a shadowy remembrance of the time when she used to lie in her little cot, listening for Margaret's step on the stairs. It seemed like a dissolving view of past days, which quickly faded into the light of the present.

Minna had never before realized the fact that she had belonged to another family before she was adopted into that of Lord Fortrose; she was too young when the change was made to remember much of what had preceded it, but old scenes revived old memories, and even her age, placing her between Rhoda and Bessie, both of whom seemed to acknowledge her in her natural place, and the "Miss Minna," which at first sounding odd, soon made her feel "one of them," so much more than the "Miss Raymond" of the Pentyre servants; above all, the not being the eldest, a striking change, which also brought a sort of pleasure, in a lessened responsibility, all these things awoke in her mind a multitude of thoughts, doubts, and questions, which were destined to have a gradual but powerful influence on her character and future life.

Not that this was by any means the first visit Minna had paid at King's Holm, but she was quite a child

when she had been there, and was naturally more alive to the novelty of the situation, and to the pleasure of playing with her sisters and being petted by them, than to any other impressions. She was very fond of Margaret, and sorry she was going so far away; more sorry when she saw her mother's grief at losing the daughter on whom she depended so much; but Minna did not know her mother well, and though she longed to express her sympathy, she dared not open the subject. Only with Bessie did she venture to discuss it.

Bessie looked up to Minna, with great respect and admiration, and Minna, while aware of this, loved Bessie and admired her in turn for her gentleness and patience.

"Do you think Margaret is very happy?" said Minna, one day, when she and Bessie were alone.

"Oh yes, she is, I am sure. She likes Captain Maitland better than anybody in the world, so of course she is happy to go with him."

"But does she like to leave England, and home, and mamma, and all of you?"

"She does not like it exactly, but I do not think she minds it very much," said Bessie, with a little sigh.

"Do you wish she minded it more?" asked Minna, quickly.

"Oh no, no, indeed, I don't wish that; only—" and she hesitated.

"What?" said Minna, "do go on, tell me what you think."

"I don't know; perhaps I ought not," said Bessie.

"Why, is it wrong?"

"No; at least I hope not. Minna, could you be

happy at leaving a place if what you loved very much was there?"

"How do you mean? if I had to leave what I loved very much?"

"Yes!" said Bessie, her large thoughtful eyes fixed on her sister's face.

A vivid picture rose to Minna's mind. To leave her aunt. Pentyre, with all its loveliness. Winifred! The bright tears rose to her eyes as she answered,

"Oh no, I could not; I really could not do it; at least I should be very, very unhappy."

"Well," said Bessie, "I think sometimes that if you had not gone away, Margaret would have been much more sorry to leave home, for she was so very fond of you, and till she knew Captain Maitland, I don't think she cared as much about anybody else, and that is why I think she is not so very sorry to go. Mamma told me about her being so unhappy when you went away, for of course I cannot remember it. Oh Minna, I wish you need not go again," added Bessie, earnestly.

Minna raised her head; the colour came hot to her cheeks as she said, in a half suppressed yet anxious tone, "Oh, Bessie, don't say that. You don't know what I feel when you say that. Please, dear, never say it again."

Minna spoke in a hurried, almost frightened manner.

Bessie was surprised.

"Why, Minna, you do not think——"

"No, no! I only think you are very kind, and you think much more of me than you would if you knew me better; but really Rhoda is much more useful to you than I could be, and she takes so much care of

you, and I can only amuse you sometimes, so you would be tired of me if I stayed very long."

"Winifred is not. I don't know what she would do without you. Geraldine is so little, and now Herbert is at school, Winifred would be quite lonely if you were not there, so of course it is all right. What a good thing you were in London, to come here now."

"We came to London on purpose."

"Did you? All the way from Wales? Mamma did not tell me that; she only said you were coming if you were in London soon enough. Why did you not come to London last year and the year before? Did you and Winifred like being left?"

"We did not mind it at all. Oh, Bessie, you cannot imagine how lovely last summer was at Pentyre. We were out nearly all day; the woods are so large, and so thick and dark, we used to wander about and almost lose ourselves, and tell our adventures when we met. Herbert and Winifred used to go together, and I went another way alone; or we made friends with some of the grand old trees, and had stories about them, and—"

"What sort of stories?" said Bessie.

"Oh, stories of what they look like."

"But what do they look like except trees?"

"Oh, all sorts of things I can't explain. But there is one tall pine that grows all by itself on a hill, and all the high winds sweep over it, and once the lightning struck it, but it is not bent, only torn, and broken in some parts, and it still has some dark boughs to wave, for there is always wind up there. And that tree has a story."

"Will you tell it me?" said Bessie, deeply interested; "but did you make the story?"

"No, Winifred told it to me. She made it. We were looking at the bright sunlight on a larch that was quite young and light green, and then I turned to look at the tall pine, and said, that has borne many storms; and Winifred said, 'Yes; it is like a person who has gone through many stormy troubles, and can now bear everything calmly, except being separated for ever from his country.'"

"Then do you think," said Bessie, "that having gone through many troubles makes it easier to bear calmly those that may follow?"

"Yes; and that is what Winifred said, because he knows by experience that it is of no use to fret and be impatient about them; he did all he possibly could to prevent the great trouble, and then when it came he was calm."

"But what was the great trouble?"

"I don't know."

"Was that all the story?"

"She said he could bear all except being separated from his country, or from people he loved; separated for ever she meant."

"But suppose he had to bear that too?"

"Yes, I asked Winifred what he would do then, and she said he would be resigned to it if it must be; but she did not think he would ever be happy."

"What! always gloomy?"

"No, not gloomy, but very sad. Sadness would be his friend, Winifred said."

"Is Winifred sad?"

"Oh, no! so merry."

"I like the story very much; I should like to hear Winifred talk like *that*. Does she do it often?"

"Yes, out of doors. I think trees, and mountains, and the sea make people clever in a sort of way."

"Then she does not do it in London?"

"No, how could she; it is all dull, and ugly, and full of shops and people."

"But, Minna, ugly and dull! why people always talk of London being gay."

"Yes, I know; but I can never feel it so. It may be gay, at least the people may, not the place; and Winifred and I do not know them, so it is not very gay to us."

"But there may be stories about shops; I am sure I have read some, and very pretty ones too."

"Oh yes, so have I; only we could not make them, you know."

"No. Will you write down Winifred's tree-story for me, Minna? Not now, there is Margaret calling you, but when you have time."

"Yes, I will. I suppose Captain Maitland is gone, and now at last I shall have a talk with Margaret;" and away ran Minna, leaving Bessie to reflect on the, to her, very singular tastes and talents of her cousin and sister.

CHAPTER IV.

BEATRICE.

If thou shouldst never see my face again
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend.

TENNYSON.

A word, a look of shame or sadness
May check a sin ere sin be wrought;
A kinder tone, a purer gladness
May lure to Heaven a wanderer's thought.

SEWELL.

THE quiet country wedding was over. Margaret was gone, and the few guests who had been present, respecting the feelings of the family to whom the customary congratulations seemed to bring sorrowful thoughts, had quickly dispersed, all but the Fortrose family. Lord and Lady Fortrose and Winifred had come from London early, and Minna was to return with them.

Bessie had looked forward eagerly to Winifred's coming, but had not been able to see much of her, though they walked side by side in the bridal procession, following Rhoda and Minna up the aisle. Bessie looked at Winifred's bright sunny face, and wondered

why she thought of such sad things as Minna had talked about, but when she saw how very fond of Minna Winifred was, and heard her say how lonely she had felt all the week without her, the thought of keeping Minna at King's Holm, which had still haunted Bessie's heart, seemed too selfish, and she quite pitied Winifred for the week's privation.

The parting with Margaret once over, the four young bridesmaids spent a very happy afternoon.

Bessie was lying on the sofa, somewhat tired with the excitement of the day, but quite able to enjoy the liveliness of the others. Minna indeed was rather grave and silent as she sat at the foot of Bessie's sofa, but Harry and Frank, who were charmed with Winifred's brightness and good-nature, kept up with her an untiring flow of merry talk, in which Rhoda sometimes joined. Harry's ship being fortunately in port, he had got a few days' leave for his sister's marriage; he had much to tell that was amusing, and Winifred was a capital listener.

If she sometimes checked the young sailor's ready wit, and invention, by a grave "is that true?" the implied reproach was completely softened by the intense appreciation of fun that danced in her eyes, and Harry felt flattered, and reproved, at the same time.

Bessie admired Winifred's powers, for Harry had never seemed more pleasant, and she hoped Rhoda, who never could bear anything like exaggeration, would learn to check it as cleverly as Winifred did, without offending Harry; but Winifred had in truth no idea she was effecting so desirable an object, by her simple expressions of half-wondering remonstrance.

The time seemed only too short when the evening

began to close in, and Lady Fortrose came up to see Bessie, and to warn Minna and Winifred that the carriage was ordered to take them away.

Rhoda went to help them to get ready, and the two brothers having gone down to join the rest of the party, Honoria and Bessie were left together.

Honoria began to speak of Margaret, and of the loss Bessie had sustained by her marriage; and Bessie was grateful for the sympathy, but was eager to assure her cousin that while she had Rhoda there was nothing to complain of; that there was so much comfort in having a sister so much older than herself, and that nobody could be more fortunate than she was in that respect. Then Bessie proceeded to talk of Winifred, how she wished she would soon come again, and that they might become more intimate. "That I could know her as well as Minna does; not quite so well perhaps, because they are quite like sisters," added she; "but I am sure I should like her very much, she looks so happy and kind, and Minna is so fond of her."

Lady Fortrose was quite ready to hope there might be many more such happy meetings while she was in town, and she left Bessie quite cheered by the prospect. Poor little girl! it seemed like a promised reward for the effort she had made to think and speak unselfishly of Minna's love for Winifred, and never once to betray her longing to keep Minna. Since the conversation of the previous evening it had become a point of honour with Bessie to let no one know of this wish.

Minna left King's Holm with great regret; not that she would have wished to remain there without Winifred, but she had become very much interested in Bessie, who indeed never failed to interest those who

came into close contact with her, and Minna was always ready to take pleasure in the observation of new phases of character.

Bessie's retiring diffidence, and unfeigned admiration for those she thought wiser or better than herself, were a source of wonder and amusement to Minna. Not that she was incapable of feeling an almost devoted admiration for others, but there were so very few people for whom she could feel it, and Bessie seemed to extend it to almost everybody. Minna knew that this arose in part from Bessie's very humble opinion of herself, but she could not ascribe her own different feelings on the subject entirely to conceit, as she was well aware of her deficiency in various ways, but yet if she saw the same deficiency in other people, she could not admire them any more than herself. But Bessie never seemed to see any deficiency in others.

Minna's world was widening; it was not Bessie only who was to give work to the reasoning powers in her favourite study, and before another week had passed, two or three more characters had come under our heroine's notice, whom, as they will occupy a place of some importance in her story, we may as well introduce at once.

"It is as I expected," said Lady Fortrose, after reading a long foreign letter one morning; "my mother writes that a yacht voyage is decided on, and they mean to spend the autumn and winter in Madeira. Lord St. Melion will not remain another year in Italy.

"Really! a yacht voyage?" answered Lord Fortrose; "well, I should think it may be good for him; at any rate, the change may be of use to your mother, she must have been so long shut up during this last

illness. But what will Anne do, and what becomes of Beatrice? Surely a yacht voyage is not the thing for her."

"No; she is coming directly to England. Poor little Anne goes with them, but Beatrice is to be with her aunt in Dover-street this week, and my mother says she will be most thankful to accept our offer, as Lady Elizabeth cannot keep her long."

"No, poor child, I think she will be happier with you. I suppose you will call on Lady Elizabeth and settle about it. Let me see, Beatrice is how old? How will she fit in with Minna and Winifred?"

"Oh, she is much older, she must be seventeen now, but I fancy her somewhat childish for her age. You see my mother has never been able to attend to them much, and Anne could not be pressed forward. Besides which, all that moving about disturbs education so much; I think Minna is probably quite as well up in good sound information as Beatrice. I suppose Lady Elizabeth will wish to keep her while she is in London, and if that is the case, I can of course make no objection; but it will be an additional reason for shortening our stay, for I shall not see much of her while we are in separate houses; and indeed I should be afraid to go to Dover-street very often, for I think Lady Elizabeth is a little tenacious about her brother's children; at least she has always given me a little that feeling with regard to Hazelby."

"By-the-bye, what is to become of him this summer? I hope we shall have him in Wales."

"Oh, yes; I mean to beg for him certainly. It would be too bad not to let us have him in the holidays, since he *cannot join* his father as usual."

"I must say I think that is rather an advantage; he is a nice boy, but it is a great pity he should not see something of English country life. The holidays spent abroad may have given him a more cultivated taste than is usual with boys of his age, but after all, a knowledge of languages and a taste for scenery are not the first requisites to form the character of an English gentleman."

"No," said Lady Fortrose; "and I quite agree in thinking Hazelby had better be more in England now, but I hope his foreign trips have given him something more valuable than a knowledge of languages and an appreciation of scenery; one thing I really believe, that his value for and love of his own country, and her institutions, have been strengthened and increased by seeing something of the many troubles, and miseries, existing under less free and constitutional governments."

"Why, Honoria, a speech on politics and patriotism, I declare! you are coming out in a new character. I am very glad you think your brother so likely to have made the most of his time abroad; but don't let him see too much of Lady Elizabeth, for she will not improve him."

And with this piece of advice Lord Fortrose left Honoria to reflect on what she had to arrange on her young sister's behalf. Beatrice Arlington was the daughter of Honoria's mother by the second marriage, which was mentioned before, and had spent much of her life in Italy, on account of the delicate health of her father, Lord St. Melion, whose inclinations, as well as the advice of his doctors, led him to prefer a residence abroad. And this was not to be wondered at, as he was entirely precluded by the state of his health from

taking any part in the avocations proper to his position at home. He had one son, Lord Hazelby, the subject of the last conversation, and one other daughter, the little Lady Anne, who seemed to inherit much of her father's delicacy of health.

Beatrice had been educated in a very desultory manner, but was sufficiently quick and clever to make readiness often pass for knowledge, and frequently gained credit for more information than she really possessed.

A very lively, prepossessing manner also contributed, as it always will, to make her generally popular; and as she was not shy, she found no difficulty in getting on with strangers, under which category many of her nearest relations were included.

It was a long time since the sisters had met, and Honoria felt very anxious for a renewal of acquaintance, and rather disappointed at not being at once allowed to assume the charge of Beatrice; but Lady Elizabeth Fairstone having been applied to by Lady St. Melion, who was not aware that Honoria would be in London so early in the year, had offered to receive her niece on a visit until Lady Fortrose returned to Wales, and would have been much hurt and offended had any change in this plan been attempted. Minna and Winifred were much pleased to hear that Beatrice was expected; they had never seen her, but were quite prepared to be pleased with Lady Fortrose's sister, and many were the conjectures as to what she would be like, and how they would get on together. Winifred had some misgivings that her young aunt would despise the companionship of a niece of ten years old, but Minna suggested that Lady Fortrose did not think Winifred too young to talk with, and therefore Beatrice

certainly need not. But this conclusion proved Minna to be unacquainted with the peculiarities incidental to young ladies of seventeen, who are generally much less disposed to make children their friends than people of seven-and-twenty would be.

The two cousins were sitting together one afternoon, and the conversation had, as usual, turned on the unknown and anxiously-expected relation, when a servant entered the room with the information that Lady Elizabeth Fairstone was in the drawing-room, and had asked for the young ladies.

"Can Beatrice be come? What a pity mamma is out!" said Winifred.

"Is anybody with Lady Elizabeth?" inquired Minna of the servant.

"No, ma'am. I mentioned that my lady was not at home, but Lady Elizabeth said she thought you would see her."

"Oh, yes! come Winifred."

But Winifred hung back.

"I don't know her, Minna; she only wants you. I do not want to go and see her."

"Oh, yes! do come; you ought, really, I am sure Auntie would wish it. Besides, I don't like going in alone."

"I wish people would not call when mamma is out," sighed Winifred, unwillingly following her cousin down stairs.

"Perhaps Lady Elizabeth is come to tell us about Beatrice, and wants to leave some message for my aunt."

"What should I have done if you had been out too?"

This question, on what would indeed have been to

Winifred an awful dilemma, remained unanswered, except by Minna's smile, for they had reached the drawing-room door. Lady Elizabeth rose at their entrance, and advanced to meet Minna with great *empressement.*

"My dear Miss Maxwell, I am so glad to see you. I believe I ought to introduce myself; but with the connexion between our families, I am sure we cannot feel like strangers. And this is your sister. How do you do, my dear?' and she turned for a moment to Winifred. "Beatrice will be quite proud of her nieces; but really you must not call her aunt; you will make her feel so old, and there is so little difference between you in age, I suppose?"

"Not much, I believe," said Minna, seeing that this was meant as a question; "but I am in no danger of calling her aunt, as it is Winifred ——"

"Oh, yes! I understand," interrupted Lady Elizabeth. "It would really be quite an insult to be expected to give poor Beatrice the title of aunt; that can only be expected from the little ones," added she, smiling at Winifred.

"I did not mean that," said Minna, colouring; "but Beatrice is not my aunt."

"By half-blood she is, you know, and we do not take notice of these little differences of relationship."

"Oh no," said Minna, who was becoming worried with the mistake; "but she is Winifred's aunt. I am not Miss Maxwell."

Lady Elizabeth looked at her with such an expression of astonishment, that poor Minna felt her cheeks becoming crimson; but before she could explain, Winifred's *gentle voice* came to her assistance.

"Minna is my cousin, and my sister almost; it is just the same."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lady Elizabeth, rather coldly; "then your cousin is also a visitor, and you will be the one to see more of dear Beatrice."

"Oh, no," said Winifred, "I think Minna will be the most with her, because I am so little; and Minna is not a visitor, she is at home."

Lady Elizabeth turned a not very pleased glance towards Minna, who, however, had quite recovered herself, and said, gaily—

"I am Minna Raymond, and Lady Fortrose is my cousin; but I am at home here, as Winifred says. We are both looking forward to the pleasure of knowing Beatrice; she is not in England yet, I suppose?"

"Yes; she came last night to Southampton, and I expect her in town this evening. I called on purpose to tell your mamma. Will you give her the message, my love?" added Lady Elizabeth, addressing herself to Winifred.

"Yes," said Winifred, timidly.

"I think your mamma will be anxious to see her soon; but I dare say she will be tired with her journey, and glad to keep quiet for the first day or two."

Winifred raised her eyes to Lady Elizabeth's face with a glance that seemed to say—

"Do you think a visit from mamma would disturb her?" but she said nothing.

"Good-bye, then, my love," said Lady Elizabeth, in her sweetest manner; "I shall tell Beatrice all about you, and I dare say you will see her soon. Good-bye, Miss Raymond." She shook hands with Minna, and *left the room.*

The cousins stood for a few minutes in silence where she had left them. Winifred spoke first.

"I am very sorry Beatrice is not coming here," said she.

"But she is coming," said Minna.

"Ah, but I mean at first. I wish she need not go to Lady Elizabeth."

"Why?" said Minna, smiling.

"Because I should not like it, if I were Beatrice."

"I daresay you would, if you were Beatrice; for Lady Elizabeth is her aunt, and is very fond of her."

"I am glad she is not my aunt, and I could not be very fond of her," said Winifred, with an emphasis on the last word.

"Oh, Winifred, how can you know that? I am sure she was very pleasant to you."

Winifred smiled thoughtfully.

"Minna," said she, after a long silence, when they had returned to their occupations in the school-room, "do you think Beatrice will consider me one of the little ones, to be treated like Geraldine and the little children in the nursery? I know I am very little; but if she does, and if she wants you very often, you will talk to me sometimes still, will you not?"

"My dear Winifred, I hope her coming will not make any difference to our being together; if it did, I should be sorry she ever came at all. I assure you, nothing shall ever make me less fond of you and of our talks together. I wish you would put this idea quite out of your head; and you see, Lady Elizabeth did not seem to think Beatrice would look down upon you for being little."

"No, but I do not mind a bit what she thinks, if you will talk to me still, and I know you will, so I will not doubt about it any more; thank you, darling Minna," and the loving child threw her arms round her cousin's neck, and kissed her fondly.

CHAPTER V.

AUNT AND NIECE.

"Resolve," the haughty moralist would say;
"This single act is all that we demand."
Alas! such wisdom bids a creature fly,
Whose very sorrow is that time hath shorn
His natural wings.

WORDSWORTH.

LADY FORTROSE was justified in her idea that Lady Elizabeth would prefer keeping her niece almost entirely to herself, for after Beatrice had spent one day with her sister, many engagements interfered to prevent their being often together; and though Lady Fortrose often asked for Beatrice, she generally asked in vain.

"It was so necessary," Lady Elizabeth said, "that Beatrice should be introduced to her father's relations, many of whom were now in town;" and though Lady St. Melion had especially desired that Beatrice should not be considered "out," as her education was by no means finished, even as far as masters and common information were concerned, there were many concerts, early afternoon parties, &c., to which even children were taken, and at which Lady Elizabeth was delighted to introduce her niece, without disobeying the letter of her mother's injunction.

Beatrice, too, had been so little in English society, that she *really believed* there was no evasion of her

mother's wishes in this conduct, being assured by her aunt that if she were not presented or taken to balls, she could never be supposed to be "out," and so she thoroughly enjoyed the gaiety into which she was encouraged to enter.

There was, indeed, one thing that rather disturbed her. The many engagements that Lady Elizabeth accepted for her, interfered considerably with the hours appointed for masters, and study of various sorts, in which Beatrice had promised her mother to try and improve herself.

She tried once or twice to get off going to some party, rather than put off a lesson; but Lady Elizabeth was very unwilling to allow this, and always assured her that she would have plenty of time for study in the country, "where, indeed," she added, "you will be so dull, my dear, that your only resource will be in your books and music."

"Is Pentyre such a very dull place, then?" said Beatrice, half alarmed.

"Well, I have never been there myself, and I do not know anybody that has. Your sister sees no society, and thinks of nothing but bringing up her children as patterns of goodness, in which I daresay she succeeds, but of that you will be able to judge. I don't like perfect children, they are so conceited."

"I did not think Winifred seemed conceited, when Honoria brought her here the other day. They want me to spend an afternoon with them this week, and I said I thought I could."

"I really do not see how it is possible. You are engaged to luncheon to-morrow. Then there is Mrs. Hammond's party next day, and your lesson from

Signor S—— on Friday, and on Saturday I have asked the Percys and Vincents to come here, so you must just say you are engaged."

"But cannot I put off the signor," said Beatrice. "I did take my lesson yesterday, you know."

"My dear Beatrice, I am surprised at your wishing it. You know how anxious your father is about your singing, and you really have put off Signor S—— so many times. For my part I should be quite ashamed to do it again, but you must do as you like of course, my dear, only I think Lady Fortrose would be sorry that you should lose a lesson on her account."

Lady Elizabeth left the room.

Beatrice was annoyed and disappointed, because she thought Honoria would be so, but certainly the last time they had met she had expressed a hope that Beatrice did not allow her other engagements to interfere with her lessons, and Beatrice had promised to be more industrious. But she had so often put off her masters for people she did not care about, that it really seemed a sort of pretence to say she could not do it to go to her sister. She knew, however, that Lady Elizabeth would be very much vexed if she determined to go, so there was nothing to be done but to write and tell Honoria the true state of the case.

This sort of *contretemps* frequently happened during the two months that the sisters spent in London, and Beatrice remained almost a stranger to the family in Carlton Terrace.

Minna and Winifred paid several happy visits to King's Holm, and in the beginning of June they spent a long day there to take leave before returning to Pentyre. *Little Geraldine* accompanied them. Bessie,

who was very fond of children, having especially begged for her. Geraldine was now six years old, and had lately been promoted to the school-room. She was a lively, clever, little girl, and amused Bessie very much.

Minna was sorry this must be the farewell visit to King's Holm for that year, but the country looked so lovely that she could not help looking forward with great delight to the summer at Pentyre.

Winifred also greatly interested Bessie by her eloquent praises of her Welsh home, in the description of which some of her quaint poetical fancies appeared, and she promised to write and tell Bessie many particulars of her doves and other pets, who were supposed to be anxiously awaiting the return of their little mistress.

Bessie was very unhappy at parting with Minna, whose imaginative and truthful mind and affectionate warmth of manner had made a deep impression on her. Rhoda was honest, and affectionate, and useful, but matter-of-fact, and cold in manner, so Minna's brightness was quite a genial novelty.

Still no word escaped Bessie that could imply even the possibility of a wish to keep Minna. She only expressed her regrets that the cousins must go, and that so long a time would probably elapse before they paid another visit to King's Holm.

With tearful eyes the sisters parted, Minna feeling really grieved in her heart at Bessie's sorrow.

CHAPTER VI.

PENTYRE.

And this is human happiness!
Its secret and its evidence are writ
In the broad book of Nature. 'Tis to have
Attentive and believing faculties;
To go abroad rejoicing in the joy
Of beautiful and well-created things;
To love the voice of waters, and the sheen
Of silver fountains leaping to the sea;
To thrill with the rich melody of birds,
Living their life of music; to be glad
In the gay sunshine, reverent in the storm,
To see a beauty in the stirring leaf,
And find calm thoughts beneath the whispering trees;
To see, and hear, and breathe the evidence
Of God's deep wisdom in the natural world,—
This Christ-bought world, wherein His Spirit moves!

N. P. WILLIS.

THE journey to Wales was an important one this time. Beatrice was to be one of Lady Fortrose's family from the day they left London. She joined them early in the morning before starting for the railway station, and was warmly welcomed by the whole party. They had a long day to spend in the train, and everybody who has travelled by railway knows how much difference pleasant, good-tempered companions may make in lessening the weariness of such a day.

Beatrice certainly contributed to make this journey pleasant, she was so obliging and full of resource, and

very useful in amusing Geraldine, who was the only one of the little children in the same carriage with her.

They slept at C——, as it would have been too late to reach Pentyre that night. Minna and Winifred generally shared the same room on such occasions, but this time it was arranged that Minna should be with Beatrice, as Lady Fortrose did not like her to be alone in a hotel; so here was Winifred's first displacement.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when the party arrived at Pentyre. Beatrice had been loud in admiration of the country since they entered Wales, and her delight increased when she found that Lord Fortrose's property was situated among scenery as beautiful as any she had yet passed through.

Minna was very much pleased at the impression her deeply loved home seemed to make on Beatrice, but she restrained her eager happiness, till on rounding a wooded projection in the hillside, a broad expanse of sunlit sea lay before them, sparkling and glittering as each rippling wave caught the glow in its turn.

"There!" said Minna, turning first to Beatrice, and then again to the sea, with a beaming smile, almost of triumph.

Beatrice was indeed struck with the sight. It was very new to her. The whole coast was wild and very hilly, but beautifully wooded, and though the colouring was much less brilliant than that of Italy, the clear blue of the sea and sky, and the rich green of the foliage, left little to be desired even in that respect.

Winifred was delighted to see her own dear home again, but was very quiet in her happiness. She looked once and again at Beatrice, and apparently that questioning look was satisfied, and then she fixed her

eyes on the sea, and seemed unable to withdraw them from its ever-moving surface; for Winifred loved the sea better than any other object that could be presented to her view. She felt at home near it, and could scarcely feel comfortable with anybody who seemed insensible of the fascination it had for her.

"Yes, it really is lovely. Far more beautiful than I expected, and not at all dull," said Beatrice, as she stood with Minna outside the window of the drawing-room on the evening of their arrival.

"Dull!" said Minna, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, I have often heard people say that the country is very dull, but I suppose that is where there is nothing pretty to look at. I feel as if I should never be tired of this view."

"I almost think I should if I only saw it from here," said Minna; "but when you explore it all, when you know all the paths, and every hill, and wood, and rock quite well, as I do, you will not be able to love it enough, much less get tired of it; but do you like walking?"

"Yes, very much, when it is a pretty walk, and I have nice people to walk with; but you and Winifred ride, do you not?"

"Yes, and you will, too, I suppose."

"No, indeed, I shall not. I never ride."

"But would you not like it? will you not learn here?"

"No, I thank you; I dislike it very much. They put me on a horse once when I was little, to please papa, who thought I ought to ride, and I could not manage the creature a bit, and I was dreadfully frightened, for he ran away with me. I was not

thrown, and somebody soon stopped the horse; but that cured me of wishing to ride."

"But what made the horse run away?"

"Why, that was the worst of it; they said it was all my fault. I was told not to take a whip, and I would, and they let me; but I was not to use it. So we went on very well for a little while, as the coachman was leading the horse; but he left go to open a gate, and I whipped the horse to make it go through quickly, and off it flew, for it was a horse that never would bear the whip."

"I wonder you did not ride it again without any whip," said Minna.

"I should not have enjoyed riding. I like to do as I please, and not to be obliged to manage a horse this way and that way, as other people tell me, so I should be sure to get into scrapes."

"Well, I am very glad you like walking, as it does not matter generally which way one goes. So you will be able to do as you please," said Minna, laughing, "as I do not suppose anybody will wish to tell you how to manage your feet when you walk."

But Minna was rather too sanguine. Even walking did not enable Beatrice to do as she pleased about her excursions.

One very warm day she entered the school-room at about half-past twelve, exclaiming—

"Now, Minna, come; you must have finished, and I am so tired of practising. There is plenty of time before dinner, so let us go down to the Bishop's Cove."

"My dear Beatrice, it is so dreadfully hot, and there will be no shade going down the cliff; I really don't think we can go now."

"Oh, yes; you can take an umbrella, if you are afraid of the sun, and we can go perfectly well."

"No, indeed, I am sure we had better not; it would be impossible to hold up an umbrella while we are scrambling down that path. Can we not take some more shady walk?"

"Oh, what nonsense, Minna; one would think you were sugar or wax to be melted by the heat; but if you wont go, never mind. I dare say Winifred will; won't you, there's a darling," she added, turning to Winifred, who was standing by her governess, watching the correction of a mistake in her work, and so intent upon it that she did not hear what had passed.

She looked up brightly as Beatrice addressed her, however.

"What do you want me to do? I did not hear."

"Go with me for a nice scrambling walk, you deaf little thing."

"Oh, I should like it so much. May I go, Miss Forbes?"

"No, dear, I think not; it is too hot for you to go on the cliffs so early in the day. I am sorry to disappoint you, Lady Beatrice, but I really cannot let Winifred go."

"Why, really, Miss Forbes, the day is not hot enough for all this fuss; it can't hurt her."

"I think the day is much too hot for a fuss," sighed Minna, over her book.

"You are all perfectly ridiculous about the heat," said Beatrice, impatiently. "I wonder what you would do in Italy?"

"In Italy," said Miss Forbes, "I always used to remain in doors *and* keep as quiet as I could until the

great heat of the day was passed. Was not that your plan also?"

"Well, yes, generally; but I don't mind heat. I did not know you had been in Italy, Miss Forbes."

"Yes, I spent three years there, and had only just returned when I came to take charge of Minna's education."

"Really, three years! I am so glad, for I shall enjoy talking to you about it; it is so wretched to be with people who know nothing of places one likes. I suppose you liked Italy, notwithstanding the heat," she added, with a good-humoured, half apologetic smile.

"Yes," said Miss Forbes, "I liked it very much, and shall greatly enjoy going over my recollections of it with you. But, as you wished for a walk this morning, shall we all go down to the shrubbery bench? there is shade all the way, and we can take our books or work."

This proposal was well received, and immediately adopted. And so ended Beatrice's first attempt to do as she pleased with Miss Forbes.

But there were many more propitious days when the young people wandered at will over hill and valley, exploring unfrequented paths, finding new scenes of beauty, and bestowing names of their own selection on different spots that were rich in happy association or bore some resemblance to scenery, of which books had made the description familiar to them.

Certainly Pentyre was not dull. Lady Elizabeth had made a mistake, which Beatrice took care to correct in her letters.

If the days were passed pleasantly, the evenings were no less enjoyable. Games of history, poetry, or any of the numerous devices by which young people

love to excite new thought and amuse their fancy, were gladly promoted by Lady Fortrose, who entered into the enjoyment of them just as heartily as the children (so she loved to call them all), and sometimes she varied the evening's amusement by reading to them from some entertaining book. Many interesting stories were gone through in this manner. One of the chief favourites was Miss Bremer's "Strife and Peace;" it was a book that particularly pleased Minna; the freshness of feeling and truthful devotion which it describes harmonised so well with her character and tone of mind, which, while earnest and thoughtful, was particularly hopeful and bright. Beatrice objected that it was not natural for Susanna to be so devoted to the lady she lived with, but Minna exclaimed, "I could have been just the same," and then coloured with shyness at having seemed to claim a virtue which she so much admired.

The mid-summer holidays brought a change in the day's amusements. Herbert and Lord Hazelby joined the happy party, and boating took the place of walking in the long summer days.

Minna was very fond of rowing, though only a beginner in that art, and Hazelby soon learned to consider her his pupil, for he, being in the boats at Eton, was quite competent to give such instruction.

There were many sheltered nooks under the overhanging cliffs and trees where the southern sun could scarcely penetrate, and where its low western beams often stole in upon a happy party, to whom the beautiful sunset was only unwelcome, as it warned them to quit their lovely hiding place. Winifred and Minna often sat there watching the return of their companions,

for these two were never tired of exploring the rough paths and the various holes and caves in the cliff, and would often land and make a scrambling excursion while Beatrice and the two boys extended their rowing expedition. Then there were songs, and often Minna's clear voice would hail the party on the water in some favourite chorus, which was soon taken up and echoed back in fainter tones by Beatrice and her brother, both of whom had, like Minna, a correct ear and an innate love of music.

Winifred soon found that her apprehensions had been causeless. Beatrice indeed became very fond of Minna, and constantly sought her, but Minna never took back what she had given, and Winifred, who trusted her with the fullest faith of a heart that only knew truth, was in her turn the receiver of Minna's dearest confidence. Perhaps this arose partly from the fact that Beatrice was not exempt from the caprices of a spoiled child, and was therefore not always in an easy humour to deal with, and anything like caprice has a surprising effect in shaking our confidence, or hindering us from reposing it—the term repose has surely been most happily applied in such a sense—repose is precisely the thing that cannot be found in a capricious character.

Yet Minna was fortunate in the circumstances that made Beatrice her companion, for her own good temper, and the love and deference of others, led to her being so seldom contradicted, that her patience might almost have suffered for want of exercise, and this misfortune Beatrice prevented.

"Well, we have a fine day at last, and my aunt has ordered the carriage; so now for the mountains," said

Minna, joyously, one morning after a week of rainy weather had somewhat tried the patience of the young party.

"That's right! Oh! it's a glorious day. What time do we start? Why does not my sister come down? We can sail; I wonder which way the wind is?"

To this last question only Minna attempted a reply, observing that she thought the wind was west.

"Then, Hazelby," said Beatrice, "you certainly can't sail."

"Why not?" asked her brother, almost indignantly.

"Why, the wind will be blowing you on to the rocks the whole time; besides, I believe it is south-west, and then it will be dead against you."

"No," said Minna; "I am almost sure it is west. Just come and look at the flag," added she, addressing Hazelby.

They went to look from the window of the adjoining room.

"It is due west by the flag," said he, "but they say one can't always depend upon that."

"But I have another way of judging," said Minna. "There is a large lime-tree, you know, just outside my window, and when the wind is east the leaves on the nearest branch all blow over so that I can see the white underlining that they have, and in a west wind I only see the upper side of them."

"And how were they this morning, did you look?"

"Yes, and they were blowing away towards England, right side upwards."

"Well, that is the newest sort of weathercock, but I hope it is correct," said Hazelby, laughing.

"Now *then*," cried the cheerful voice of Lord Fort-

rose from the breakfast-room, "come along Hazelby, the horses will go faster than the boat I suspect, so we of the water party ought to go first. Who goes with me?"

"I do," cried Herbert.

"And I," said Minna; "I believe."

"And first-lieutenant Hazelby, that's all our crew, is it? We must take Tom, for we shall have a long way to row if the wind goes down."

"I think I shall go in the boat," said Beatrice; "will there be room?"

"Oh, yes!" said Minna, "for then I will go in the carriage; I thought you preferred driving."

"Yes, if you go too; but I never care for a long drive, you know."

"Very flattering to me, my dear," said Lady Fortrose, with a smile; "but Minna may just as well change; I am rather afraid such a long hot day in the sun will be too much for her; but are you sure you like it?"

"Well, I do not care; I will do just which you like."

"No, my dear; say which *you* like; that is what we wish to know."

"Come, Beatrice, make haste and choose, or we shall be late," said her brother.

"I don't care; Minna shall decide."

"Oh! but you do care," said Minna, good-naturedly; "you said you wished to go in the boat."

"Yes, but I do not think they want me, so I may as well not go."

"Nonsense!" began Hazelby, but Herbert interrupted him. "Papa is going down to the cove, and he sent me back to say he will start in five minutes, so make haste, Minna," and off ran the boy again.

"Yes, that decides it," said Hazelby; "Beatrice would never be ready in time, and you have nothing to get but your hat, have you?"

For Minna had already equipped herself according to the previous arrangement.

Beatrice acquiesced in the decision thus brought about by the urgency of the moment, and Minna was warmly welcomed in the boat by Herbert, who made no secret of his preference for his sisterlike cousin.

It was a west wind—Minna's singular informant had not deceived her—but towards noon the breeze almost dropped, and Lord Fortrose, Hazelby, and the boatman plied the oars vigorously. Minna was entrusted with the helm; she also contributed her part to the assistance of the rowers by singing to them now and then; but all the party were glad to reach the landing-place. It was at the entrance of a deep narrow valley, between two mountainous ranges, which rose higher and higher as they advanced inland, and whose successive peaks appeared to overlook each other till the highest and most distant only submitted to such inspection from the pure fleecy clouds that sailed in the clear sky above them all.

At some distance up this valley was the appointed place of rendezvous; and here the water-party soon joined Lady Fortrose and the others. After resting a little while they all set off to walk up a mountain which had long been an object of distant admiration to Minna. It was not one of the highest, but was particularly conspicuous, being almost unconnected with the nearest range of hills on either side, and presenting a bold and rugged front to the valley, which it seemed to close abruptly at the end. The sides of this

mountain were steep, and it was crowned with a rocky path, looking quite like a sharp point when contemplated from below. There was a jutting-out rock, rather more than half-way up, and just above this a sort of natural platform, from which the view was said to be magnificent; and it was to this point that Minna and Winifred professed themselves ambitious to attain, while Minna was not without a secret hope of persuading Lord Fortrose to let her get up to the peak above.

They started in high spirits, and the ascent seemed wonderfully easy to their young and eager feet.

Beatrice had been pleased with her drive, which proved more interesting than she had expected, and now she amused herself by trying to outstrip the ever-active Minna. This, however, was more easy than usual, as they got higher up, for Minna frequently stopped to admire the beautiful views that broke upon her sight as she surmounted the lower heights that obstructed her gaze in the valley. Once it was a lovely little bay that she discovered, no longer concealed by a projecting cliff, over whose beetling crest our heroine could now look on the blue waters below; sleeping in the shadow of its southern boundary, the little bay presented a striking contrast to the sparkling sea beyond, and it seemed unlikely that its gray-looking waters should ever equal in brilliant animation the glittering expanse that lay beneath the sunshine; but if Bessie had been near her, Minna would have told the "story" that rose up in her mind.

"Ah," thought she, "the water in the little bay is shut up from what it loves, and from what would smile upon it, and make it smile again. The open sea

has its turn now; but never mind, poor little bay, the sun must come round to the west, and then you will glitter, not in silver, but even in gold!—only wait patiently;" and Minna smiled to herself at the smiling prospect.

"How dull the water looks in that little nook," said Lord Hazelby's voice, at her side; "it is like the colour that you objected to in my sketches of Venice, yesterday evening."

"But the sun will shine there by-and-bye."

"I suppose so. It is more fortunate than those canals, which were dark places in more ways than one. But come along, Beatrice has passed you in triumph long ago, though I wonder she is not attracted to stop and look at the view all around her."

They soon gained the desired point, from whence there was indeed a most lovely view.

Across the sea, to the south-west, the Wicklow mountains appeared like hazy clouds on the horizon; the outline of Holyhead Island was visible on the north, while a broad expanse of blue stretched far beyond it; and on the east mountains rose immediately at hand, while Snowdon was the crowning point of the landscape. Minna was delighted. Her expectations were not at all disappointed, and her love of mountain scenery was gratified.

After eating their luncheon on the projecting rock, Minna begged Lord Fortrose to go with her up to the top of the peak above, but he declared it was too steep, and though Hazelby and Herbert started boldly on the ascent, they soon returned panting with the heat and exertion, and repenting of the rash attempt, which had cost them a great deal of trouble.

The evening was cooler, and at six o'clock the party left their resting-place, and began to retrace their steps down the mountain. Minna did not forget the little bay; but when she came in sight of it again, she was rather disappointed to find that the sun was not yet low enough to endow it with all the glory she had imagined; only at the entrance was the water enlivened by the western rays, but the brightness spread gradually inward as Minna looked, and at last only the inmost recesses remained in shade; one sad thought or remembrance which even that brightness could not quite efface, thought she, pursuing her little allegory, and she passed on, only half satisfied with the fate of the little bay.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW YEAR.

Hark! the voice of joy and singing
In the halls of mirth and light,
Thy passing bell is ringing,
Old Year, good night! good night!

Oh! may the new year cherish
All the hopes that now are bright,
And once more ere thou perish,
Old Year, good night! good night!

Song.

THREE years had passed away. The family at Pentyre Castle had no loss, no tale of sorrow to inscribe as a record of those days; changes a few had certainly come, but only such as time must bring to the youngest and the happiest. Increased age to those whose new years are still hailed with joy and pride, the pleasures of childhood to infancy, the interests and delights of youth to those just emerging from childhood, and graver interests and yet undeveloped cares to those who guard and cherish the advancing steps of the many to whom life is yet a new lesson.

The party at Pentyre was increased by the arrival of Lady St. Melion, with her little daughter, Lady Anne, and Lady Elizabeth Fairstone, a day or two after Christmas. Hazelby had also brought with him from Oxford a friend, of whom he was very fond, Edward Greville by name, whose musical talents and

pleasant manners and conversation soon gained him favour with the rest of the family.

If my readers had joined Minna again after this two years' separation, I do not think they would have found her much altered. Bright and happy as ever, fearless of clouds for herself, and yet warmly sympathising in the troubles of other people, her tender feelings were awakened by the evident weakness and expression of pain in Lady Anne's countenance, and she endeavoured to cheer and enliven her, when the little invalid seemed inclined to fret over her hard lot in being unable to join the others to dance the New Year in.

Contrary to her mother's wishes, Lady Anne had insisted on sitting up to see the dance; but it was so evident, from the expression of her face, that the pleasure of others was pain to her, that Minna went to sit by her, and tried to divert her attention. This, however, was difficult, for the subject was recalled to the notice of both by Mr. Greville.

"Miss Raymond," said he, "I have looked for you everywhere. Do let me persuade you to come and dance the Old Year out."

"No, thank you," said Minna; "I am rather tired, so I am going to be a spectator of this dance."

"But it will be the last; it is now a quarter to twelve. You surely mean to dance the New Year in?"

"I think that is better than dancing the Old Year out, but I really had rather do neither, so you must excuse me."

"Is your decision irrevocable?"

"Yes," said the laughing voice of Lord Hazelby; "Miss Raymond never changes her mind, so I advise

you to come and find another partner before they are all engaged."

Mr. Greville at once preferred his request to Lady Elizabeth, who was seated on the other side of Anne's sofa, and this time he was accepted, somewhat to Minna's amusement, which was shared by Hazelby, whose eyebrows sustained a momentary elevation as he led his partner to her place in the dance. But Minna really felt much obliged to Mr. Greville, for she wanted to talk to Anne, and could do so much better when Lady Elizabeth was out of hearing.

"I wonder you don't dance," said Anne; "but people never want to do what they can. It is very ungrateful I think."

"But I have been dancing a great deal," said Minna, "and now I like to rest and talk to you."

"I wish I could dance," sighed Lady Anne; "I like it better than talking."

"But you could not always be dancing, and you can always talk," returned Minna.

"No I can't."

Minna looked her inquiry, and Lady Anne continued.

"Very often I sit by myself for hours, and have nobody to talk to. Mamma is always with papa, and I am not allowed to sit in his room because it is kept so hot."

"Lord St. Melion is better now, is he not?" said Minna, wishing to change the conversation.

"Yes; and I want to go back to him; but I am to stay in England if I am well enough. But I hope I shall not be," added she, in a low voice.

"You like living in Italy?" said Minna.

"I did while Mademoiselle Vermont was with me,

but I don't since she left. One place is as bad as another. She went away when they took me that yachting tour, and since then I have had nobody, because, you see, we are always going about. Do you like aunt Elizabeth?"

"She seems very kind," replied Minna, surprised at the abrupt question; "but I do not know her well."

"Should not you hate to live with her?" again inquired Lady Anne.

"I don't know. Unless I knew her better I could not be a fair judge."

"Oh, nonsense! people always know who they like; and you do not like her, so you may just as well say so. I can't bear her, and I won't live with her whatever happens."

"Beatrice enjoyed her visits with Lady Elizabeth last summer," said Minna.

"Visiting is different; and I am not Beatrice, and Beatrice is not lame," said Anne, bitterly.

Minna was grieved at the turn the conversation had taken, and was thinking how she could change it, when Lady Anne began again.

"Your sister is ill, is she not?"

"Yes," said Minna. "She is never very well. Did Beatrice tell you about her?"

"No," said Lady Anne, half smiling.

"Who could it be then?"

"It was somebody who almost made me take a dislike to her."

"Oh, why," said Minna, eagerly. "Who could have said anything unkind of poor Bessie?"

"I did not say it was anything unkind," said Lady Anne.

"Then why should you take a dislike to her?"

"Because I thought she was being held up as a pattern to me."

"A pattern to you! but by whom? do tell me; is it anybody I know?"

"There now, I have puzzled you. It was somebody I met in Italy, and here is mamma coming to say I must go to bed. Good night; a happy New Year to you! and I hope I shall know your sister Bessie some day," whispered she, as Minna helped her from the sofa and gave her the crutches, on which she was obliged to lean in walking.

New Year's Day was ushered in by a clear frosty morning; the sun bright almost as that of summer.

A merry party was assembled round the breakfast table.

It is perhaps remarkable that very few of us can prove that we have sat down to breakfast with exactly the same party on two following New Year's Days. Happy if the difference is caused, as on the present occasion, by an addition to the number of our friends rather than by the loss of some who used to gladden us with their presence.

And was it a fancy of Minna's, or was it from the genial influence of happiness around, that Lady Anne's face wore a less saddened expression, as she took her place at the breakfast table, while Hazelby carefully relieved her of her crutches, and Minna welcomed her with the usual New Year's greeting.

It was no fancy. Lady Anne's heart, like all others, was open to the power of sympathy. Whether it had been denied to her, or whether she had only fancied that her sufferings were unappreciated, she had equally

been a stranger to the comfort that genuine sympathy can give. Somehow the last night's conversation with Minna had pleased her, more especially as, like many other afflicted persons, she was both sensitive and quicksighted, and she was pretty nearly convinced that Minna had a good-natured motive in coming to sit with her instead of dancing. Such were the reflections that imparted a touch of cheerfulness to her face, and her brother's tenderness of manner and watchful attention the moment she appeared, disposed her yet more to feel pleased with her neighbours this morning.

Beatrice was perhaps the most altered of all the young party. She had become less capricious, and more desirous to do right than to do as she pleased, according to her own favourite phrase. She was very fond of Minna, and they were generally together, as Minna was less in the school-room, and Winifred, on the contrary, was more constantly engaged in the studies in which Geraldine was now of an age to be her companion. Still Beatrice had not arrived at the triumph of unselfishness which could make her willing actually to guide her own inclinations by those of another. She could passively submit, a great step for her, but she could not voluntarily undertake to do what she did not prefer, so it remained for Minna to "think of being good-natured," as Herbert expressed it. Beatrice would, only she did not think of it.

Lady Elizabeth had begged to have Beatrice with her for a few weeks in the summer, and had taken her to pay various visits, the accounts of which, faithfully transmitted by letter to Minna, had afforded the latter considerable amusement; for Beatrice excelled in graphic descriptions, which were only sometimes in

danger of bordering on the satirical. Minna was rather afraid that Beatrice would no longer enjoy the quiet life at Pentyre after all her gaiety, but here she did less than justice to the genuineness of her friend's character, for Beatrice was no less pleased to return than Minna was to welcome her back. Lady Elizabeth did not succeed in winning the affections of her nieces. She wanted the great qualification for which young people are especially apt to look—they did not feel sure of her—they were not convinced that she was true—and a young girl having once had reason to doubt a person older, and who ought to be wiser than herself, is rarely induced to restore her confidence to that person. Not that Lady Elizabeth ever positively and directly deceived her nieces, but they could plainly see that she never minded allowing a false impression if it suited her convenience, and if she wished to gain any point she was not scrupulous in the means she used. This may be a common feeling, and I may be considered too severe in thus animadverting on it, but is anything unimportant which shakes the confidence of the young in those who ought to guide them? how many girls would have grown up more true and honest-hearted if their governess, their aunt, or even their mother (for mothers, too, often fail,) had given them an example of genuine straightforwardness. I again repeat, a young girl will not give her confidence where she sees that of others abused, and if she does not give it to the right person she will, in her natural longing for sympathy, give it to the wrong one, and thus untold evil is brought about.

But to return to our New Year's party. Various plans were in agitation for the morning's amusement;

skating of course for the gentlemen, and for Beatrice too, in spite of her brother's dignified remonstrances; for she had learned the accomplishment under Lord Fortrose's auspices the winter before, when Hazelby was absent, and now, to his great annoyance, he found her bent on exercising it. He had, for some unexplained reason, a great objection to ladies skating, and could not see why Beatrice should be so obstinate in refusing to ride and determining to skate. Lord Fortrose, however, only laughed at what he called a fine gentleman's particularity, and Lady Fortrose was too glad to see Beatrice interested, contrary to her wont, in any out-of-doors pursuit to wish to throw any impediment in her way.

Lord Fortrose tried to persuade Minna also to join, but she, though generally brave, was a terrible coward on the ice, and steadily refused to venture, though, as she laughingly assured Hazelby, it was not principle, but the fear of falling, that deterred her from the attempt. So she agreed to go down to the pond with the rest of the party, and to entrust herself to the guidance of some of the gentlemen who would drive her in a chair.

Winifred and Geraldine also delighted in this mode of skating by proxy, and the gentlemen talked of engaging their partners, as if for a dance.

"No, my dear, indeed you cannot, it will be much too cold; I could not think of letting you go; do not ask me, Anne, my love."

These words struck on Minna's ear, and made her hesitate in replying to Mr. Greville's assurances that he would drive her safely, as she seemed unwilling to commit herself to the care of any one but Lord Fortrose.

"Oh, yes," said she, at last, "I do not doubt it; I can quite trust you, but I do not think I shall go this morning."

"Not go! oh, Miss Raymond, you must go, indeed! Lord Fortrose, do keep Miss Raymond to her engagement, she is trying to fight off."

"Well, if it is for your sake, I wonder you complain," said Lord Fortrose; "but you had better let me drive her first; she is a shocking coward."

"Oh, no, it is not that," said Minna, feeling provoked at Lord Fortrose's way of misunderstanding; "but I do not think I shall go down to the ice at all this morning."

"I heard last night that Miss Raymond never changed her mind," said Mr. Greville, in a low tone. He was sitting next to her.

"Mother," said Hazelby, across the table, "do you think Anne might take a drive with me in the little phaeton? It is such a fine morning, and I will take her in perfectly sheltered roads; should you like it, Anne?" he added, turning to the little girl.

There was no doubt that she would like it; her face was quite bright now, and Lady St. Melion consented, with many injunctions to Hazelby about keeping out of the way of the wind; there was not a breath stirring, so he faithfully promised obedience.

In the meantime Minna had been undergoing a series of attacks from the others; she was first called capricious by Herbert; then Lord Fortrose rallied her on letting her fears get the better of her principles again, and when her aunt was called on for an opinion, and said—"I think, my dear Minna, you would really enjoy it," Minna gladly acquiesced, and submitted

a second triumphant charge of caprice from Herbert, while Lady Elizabeth quietly remarked that she "thought Miss Raymond always meant to go," uttering this as if she had not heard anything of what had passed at the table.

So Minna went, and gained courage, and enjoyed the morning so much, that when at one o'clock Hazelby appeared on the bank, she said—

"Oh! did not Anne go?"

"Yes," said he; "and I have taken her home again; we were only allowed an hour and a-half, but I think she enjoyed her drive."

"An hour and a-half! why, what o'clock is it?"

"It must be nearly one, and by-the-bye, my sister hopes you and Beatrice will soon come home; she thinks you will be tired, but I must give you one drive first." And he skated to fetch a chair which stood at some distance. On the way he met Beatrice, and delivered Lady Fortrose's message, which was received with great disapprobation; but Hazelby, having possessed himself of the chair, returned to Minna. She was soon seated, and gliding rapidly round the pond, for Hazelby was a very good skater. Once he stopped to take breath, and said,

"You have made poor little Anne very fond of you already; but I should have been sorry if you had given up the ice on her account. It was very kind of you. Beatrice ought to have thought of it, but she will forget to think, if you always think for her, will she not?"

"Oh, I must try and make Anne happy when I can, and really you are rather hard upon Beatrice; she is very good-natured, but it would be too much to expect

her to give up her skating, as it is the thing in which she particularly delights, and you see she has not so much out-of-door pleasure as I, for she does not ride."

"Ah, you only think of Beatrice and Anne. You don't consider that you lost me my reputation for discriminating character."

"How can I have done that?" said Minna, laughing.

"Why, I told Greville last night that you never changed your mind, and of course this morning proved, as he thinks, that I was quite mistaken."

"Well, everybody is mistaken sometimes, and you really were in this instance, for I very often change my mind."

"I thought you prided yourself on your firmness."

"Or obstinacy," said Minna; "which do you mean? for I think people who pride themselves on their firmness are almost always obstinate. But now I really must be firm," added she, smiling; "so please take me to the landing-place, as it is quite time that I should go home."

Hazelby complied, and Beatrice and Minna were soon treading briskly over the sparkling snow, on their way back to the castle.

"I can't think what possessed you, Minna, to say you would not come down to the ice this morning. Were you really afraid?"

"Oh no," said Minna; "but I thought I might be better employed."

"Why, even the children have a holiday on New Year's Day. You quite provoke me, and then you make aunt Elizabeth drive me mad."

"My dear Beatrice, what can you mean?"

"Why, did you not see she thought, or pretended to think, that you only did it to attract attention, and be made a fuss about; and then she said, in her quiet, harmless way, she 'thought Miss Raymond always meant to go;'" and Beatrice mimicked her aunt's voice and manner so well, that Minna could not help laughing.

"Oh, it's all very well to laugh," continued Beatrice; "but I was so provoked, I nearly told her to hold her tongue."

"I am very thankful it was only 'nearly,'" said Minna.

"Well, but Minna, I do wish you would remember what people will think before you do things."

"But how am I to know what they will think? Some think good-naturedly, and some do not."

"Never reproach me with being severe on aunt Elizabeth after that," said Beatrice, with a mischievous glance as she entered the house; and Minna went to her room to get ready for luncheon, and to wonder whether it was possible to do anything right without somebody or other making a fuss about it. One of the trials of her life Minna supposed this must be, for the thing of all others she disliked was a fuss. By and bye came a knock at the door, and Winifred appeared.

"Oh, Minna, I am so glad you are come in, I want to talk to you about Anne, she is so odd; but she likes you very much, and she says she likes talking to me, but she does say such very odd things."

"Yes, I know she does sometimes, but what sort of things do you mean?"

"Why, she finds fault, you know, with almost

everybody, even with her mother, and I don't know what to say, and then she says she knows I think so."

"You think, how?"

"Why, whatever *she* thinks; and sometimes I do, but it does not seem right to say it, and yet people ought to say what they think."

"Yes, on subjects about which they ought to say anything at all; but I am afraid Anne does not always limit herself to those. Did she talk to you about Bessie?"

"No," said Winifred, brightening. "Does she know her?"

"No, but she knows all about her, and says she would like to know her. I think she would like to hear of her from you. But there is the gong, we must go down, and we will finish our talk another time."

CHAPTER VIII.

HIDE AND SEEK.

There groups of merry children played;
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed.
O precious hours! O golden prime,
And affluence of love and time!
Even as a miser counts his gold,
Those hours the ancient time-piece told,—
"For ever—never!
Never—for ever!"

LONGFELLOW.

What then are days to have such tearful power?
One day—one day. One hour—and then, one hour!

"I HAVE some news for you, Minna," said Lady Fortrose. "Visitors in prospect—who do you think?"

"Not Rhoda?" said Minna.

"That is not a bad guess; but it is not Rhoda. Try again."

"Bessie?" said Minna in an accent of great surprise.

"No, it is not a lady," said Lady Fortrose.

"Somebody you are very fond of, though," said Herbert, who was in the secret.

"Oh, Frank!" cried Minna. "I am so glad."

"But that is not all, there is somebody else," said Lady Fortrose, "an officer in Her Majesty's service."

"Harry! Is it possible! Oh, how very delightful! When is he coming?" asked Minna, eagerly.

"To-day, or to-morrow at the latest, I hope. He has written to propose himself, having one week

leave remaining. It is so kind of him to come, and I am so very glad you will have such a nice sight of him before he leaves England again. You know Captain Raymond, I think," added Lady Fortrose, turning to Lady St. Melion; "so we shall be a charming, sociable party."

"Oh," thought Minna, "Lady St. Melion knows Harry;" and she looked at Anne, whose half-smile told her she had guessed right. Yes, it was Harry who had talked to the little invalid of his own delicate little sister, not as Anne at first fancied, by way of holding up a pattern to her, but to interest her in hearing of another so near her own age, to whom the privations consequent on ill-health were not unknown.

After luncheon Minna went into the drawing-room with Anne.

"So you know my brother Harry," said Minna. "I am so glad; and it was he that told you about Bessie. I daresay you know him nearly as well as I do, for it is a long time since I have seen him."

"Do you never go home, then?" asked Anne.

"Yes, but the two last times I was there he was away on a foreign station."

"Perhaps it was then that I met him. His ship was in the Mediterranean, and we knew him at Naples."

"But does not Bessie want you to stay when you are at home?"

"Oh," interposed Winifred, who, with Beatrice, had just joined them; "oh, you know Bessie is not alone, she has Rhoda."

"Well, and you have Geraldine," said Anne.

"Well," said Winifred, looking up doubtfully; "but that is quite different; Geraldine is younger than I am."

"Beatrice is not; and I don't believe you would like it if Minna were taken away, and you were told you must not care because you have Beatrice. If I were Bessie, I should not like it at all."

"Nonsense, Anne," said Beatrice; "you don't mind being without me, I'm sure."

"I am used to it," said Anne, coldly.

"So are Minna's sisters," continued Beatrice.

"Well, of course I am wrong," said Anne, with an air of resignation; "but," added she, in a low voice, "I don't believe I am the only person that thinks so."

Minna had been working fast and busily; she now raised her head. "I do not think you are wrong, Anne, because you cannot judge differently without knowing more; and if I were no better informed than you are on the subject, I should agree with you; but I know Bessie does not want me while she has Rhoda; and I tell you this that you may know I don't forget to think about it, for I often do, and more than that, I have quite settled that if Rhoda were to marry I must go home to Bessie."

"To stay?" inquired Anne, in a very gentle tone.

"Yes," said Minna, without looking up again.

"Oh, then it is to be hoped Rhoda will be an old maid," said Beatrice, "for I am sure this house would never get on without you. What do you think, Winifred?"

"You do not really mean it, do you, Minna?" said Winifred.

"Yes, she does," said Anne.

Winifred kept her eyes fixed on Minna's face, and tried to look under the long eyelashes which concealed the feeling her eyes were always ready to betray.

Minna rose up suddenly, and began folding up her work, saying at the same time—

"My dear Winifred, Rhoda has no more idea of being married at present than you have, so why need we think about such remote possibilities. Let us go now and keep our promise of playing at hide-and-seek with the children before it gets dark enough to frighten Wentworth."

"Yes, poor little boy, he must not hide alone, said Winifred; "I will get Miss Forbes to come, if I can, he is always glad of her protection."

And off ran Winifred to the school-room, where her proposition was received with acclamations by Geraldine and Herbert, and with quieter sympathy by Miss Forbes, who readily undertook the charge of Wentworth.

The party met on a broad landing-place whence many passages diverged, and there Minna joined them, bringing with her from the nursery the fair, timid, little Wentworth, a pretty boy, five years old, and his braver companion, Stuart, a daring, manly little fellow, who, though only just four, was always admitted to games with the elder ones, being, as Herbert admiringly declared, "the pluckiest little fellow in the world, and awfully pretty." It was amusing to see Stuart smoothing a difficulty for Wentworth, or boldly facing a danger, and then turning back to assure his brother it was "nuffing."

This brave little gentleman was, however, consigned to the charge of Minna, who was particularly fond of him; and the sides having been chosen, the hiders stealthily retreated to their various places of concealment.

Minna and Beatrice had been appointed to choose,

and were therefore considered the heads of their respective parties. That of Beatrice was to hide first. The seekers, who allowed plenty of time before they started on their search, were very successful, everybody was caught except Wentworth.

Next time, however, the search was more difficult. Minna and Stuart were nowhere to be found; all the others were caught or "came home," one by one; still there was no sign of Minna or her little companion.

Anne had a chair on the broad landing-place, from whence she could watch the game, and she became quite excited as the interest increased.

Beatrice returned from a fruitless search, and was going off again in another direction, when she was stopped by hearing Anne's voice in angry expostulation.

"No, you shall not! It's very unfair. I'll tell Beatrice."

"What's the matter?" said the last-named personage, reappearing suddenly.

"Why, Geraldine wants to go away and help Minna. Is it fair? Ought she not to stay here now she is caught?"

"Of course," said Beatrice, hastily, "keep her. Geraldine, I am surprised at you."

And Beatrice again set off on her search. Geraldine sat down on the floor, looking puzzled and unhappy, and cast an anxious glance now and then down one of the passages. Suddenly her face grew cheerful again, and Minna appeared, closely followed by Stuart, his bright cheeks flushed with excitement. Anne was talking to Miss Forbes, and did not see Minna till she was pretty near. Then she shouted, "Oh, Beatrice!—*here's* Minna!" But Minna was too quick for them. *Miss Forbes*, recollecting the duties of the game, flew to

intercept her entrance, but Minna was safe before she reached her, and little Stuart shouted "Home" in a voice of triumph.

"Where can you have been, Minna? I have looked everywhere," said Beatrice.

"Yes, where have you been?" said Winifred.

"Oh, I shall not reveal my hiding-place as it is such a good one."

"Stuart," said Beatrice, "where did you hide?"

"Wiv Minna," was the concise reply.

"But where, darling?" asked Winifred, coaxingly, with a sly glance at Minna.

"Sha'n't tell," said the little boy, with an important air.

"Well done! show them you can keep a secret," cried Herbert. "Now, then, be off, Beatrice and Winifred; we are coming directly."

"Oh, no; give us time."

"Very well. Be quick; we will count a hundred. One—two—they are gone now. Minna, do tell me where you hid?"

"No, no; a secret is no secret if everybody knows it, so we will keep it to ourselves," and she pressed the hand of Geraldine, who stood on the other side of her.

"I have counted a hundred," said Anne, "so you may start now."

They were soon ardently engaged in the pursuit. This time it was Winifred who escaped; and Beatrice, having again been caught, expressed her determination not to let Minna get home again safe, even if she betook herself once more to her wonderful hiding-place.

But when Minna's party had all been hidden, and most of *them* were discovered; and after the peals of

laughter that hailed Winifred's detection of Herbert (ensconced in the soft pillows in an immense spare bed, and covered with a heavy counterpane) had in some degree subsided, there was a general exclamation—"Where *can* Minna be?"

"I *will* find her," said Beatrice; "she is gone to that wonderful place of hers, of course. No, no, Miss Geraldine," added she, observing an expression she did not understand on the little girl's face, "you don't go and help her; Anne, you must watch Geraldine, and I will find Minna, if she can be found."

Beatrice and Winifred disappeared, leaving Miss Forbes to watch near home.

A long time elapsed. Herbert whistled impatiently, talked, sang, and wished Minna would come, it was so stupid hiding so long. At this speech Geraldine looked up quickly, but Anne was watching her, and she looked away again. A few minutes more passed, and then Geraldine seeing Anne engaged in playing cat's cradles with Herbert, who had produced a piece of string from his pocket, rose quietly, and was out of sight before Anne missed her; she flew down a long passage, and was just stopping to listen cautiously before opening a door at the end of it, when she heard her name pronounced in a tone of indignant surprise, and Beatrice seized her by the arm.

"How dare you cheat so, Geraldine!—going to tell Minna we were all out of the way."

"No, I was not going for that; but do let me go, I really must."

"You really must play unfairly! I never heard such a thing; go back directly; I shall certainly tell Miss Forbes."

"But Beatrice, Minna——."

"There, you said you were not going to help her, and now it comes out. People who play unfairly can't be expected to speak truth."

"It *is* truth, and I tell you if you don't let me explain you will be sorry," said Geraldine, passionately, "for Minna——."

"Nonsense! go away;" said Beatrice, now very angry, "and don't threaten me with Minna; be sorry, indeed; I am very sorry you are so dishonest; no, go away, you are keeping me on purpose now, I daresay, to give Minna time to get home."

Geraldine began to cry, and hastily returned to Anne, who met her with new reproaches. Geraldine asked where Miss Forbes was, and said she must speak to her, but Anne and Herbert refused to allow her to follow Miss Forbes, who was gone to help in the useless search.

On this Geraldine raised her voice, and called Miss Forbes as loud as she could, but was instantly stopped by Herbert, who placed his hand on her mouth, saying she should not call Miss Forbes away just to let Minna escape; and that he really would not play with Geraldine again, and he was quite sure Minna would not when she knew how ill she had behaved.

Geraldine burst into passionate tears.

"She can't get out," sobbed she, "and it will be all your fault, and I promised——. I *will* tell Miss Forbes," and she again screamed for her governess as loudly as she could.

"Can't get out," said Herbert, surprised; "what do you mean?"

But Miss Forbes had heard Geraldine's voice, and

now came hastily forward. "Geraldine crying! what is the matter?"

"Oh, Miss Forbes, I promised Minna I would let her out, and they won't let me go, and she can't get out, and——."

"Out, my dear! where is she?"

Geraldine whispered a few words. Miss Forbes uttered a hasty exclamation, and was gone. In another moment they heard her calling Geraldine, and the little girl followed her unopposed by her two vigilant guards.

"What did Geraldine say, Herbert?"

"I don't know, only it seems Minna is shut up somewhere, and she was to have opened the door."

"What a bad plan," said Anne, "but I wish we had let her go."

"Yes; but she did not explain what she wanted. Hark! that's Minna's voice; here they come. Stuart crying! what a wonder!" and Herbert ran forward and met Miss Forbes, who was coming quickly along the passage with little Stuart in her arms. He had been crying, and was now with a mournful voice giving an account of the cause of his tears. From this and the more lucid explanation given by Minna (to whose hand Geraldine was clinging as to a recovered treasure), it appeared that Minna had chosen for her hiding-place a very large box or chest, whose lid did not close, being prevented by the lock having been turned while the box was open; Minna had got into it with Stuart, by Geraldine's assistance, and it was agreed that Geraldine should come and help them out if they did not appear soon after the search began.

The first time of hiding, Minna was able to push up

the lid and get out, but the second time, just after she had concealed herself, a housemaid came into the little room where the chest stood, and placed a quantity of clean folded sheets and counterpanes on the top of it, quite unconscious of its contents. Minna was much amused, and little Stuart was quite delighted with the idea of being so well concealed; but when Minna attempted to raise the lid, the increased weight was too much for her, and she was fain to wait for Geraldine's assistance. Stuart amused himself for some time peeping through the crack and listening for the catchers, but when the sound of their footsteps passed away, and no Geraldine came, he began to get frightened and angry. He told Minna he would never hide with her again, and that she was very naughty to put him in a box and not take him out; and finally, when Minna was really becoming nervous and uncomfortable, he began to cry inconsolably. She could only hope he would be heard by some of the others, but in the meantime all the terrible stories she had ever heard of the bad effects of fright on a child recurred to her memory, and she blamed herself, oh, how deeply, for her folly and rashness.

From this state of distress the two prisoners were at length relieved by hearing Miss Forbes approach. The moment Minna heard the well-known footstep, she called at the highest pitch of her voice; the lid was at once raised, and Stuart sprang into Miss Forbes' arms, while Geraldine, with many tears and apologies, helped Minna out, and began to account for her apparent faithlessness. Happily there was no harm done. Miss Forbes discouraged any strong expressions of pity for Stuart's fears, and he seemed suddenly to forget

them on seeing Wentworth's face of wondering sympathy, and hearing Herbert's question—

"Were you frightened, Stuart?"

"No," shouted the little fellow, who never confessed to a fear if he could help it.

"But you cried," said Wentworth, who was unaccustomed to such weakness in his younger brother.

"I sha'n't hide with Minna no more," said Stuart, indignantly, as he gave his brother his hand, and led him away towards the nursery.

Minna had been let out of her durance in good time, for now she was summoned to Lady Fortrose's sitting-room.

Captain Raymond had arrived, but Minna's delight was checked by observing the very grave expression of his face when he met and returned her greeting. Her look of surprise and disappointment was answered by Lady Fortrose.

"He has bad news, dear Minna, and is come, after all, only to go again."

"But not to go alone," said Captain Raymond. "Minna, I am come to take you home: my mother is ill."

"Ill!" repeated Minna; "very ill? Tell me what it is. You look so sad!"

"Yes, I am afraid I must; it was a very sudden attack, but there was inflammation, and that is sometimes very dangerous. It only came on late at night, and I started early in the morning to try and bring you back, as my mother wished to see you."

"Oh, yes; when can we start? Directly, can we not? I shall be ready."

"There is a train that leaves A—— to-night at

8·45, and if you can be ready to start in half-an-hour, we may catch it, but I do not like to hurry you so."

"Oh yes, yes, I will be ready; I wish to go as soon as possible, and you will tell me all when we are off. I must not stay now. Only just tell me, is Bessie well?"

"Yes, and longing for you. Rhoda, too, is most anxious that you should come."

"Thanks. Now I will go. In half-an-hour—I will be punctual;" and Minna left the room to hasten the preparations for her departure.

She found Lady Fortrose giving directions to the maid whom she had summoned to pack up Minna's things.

"And you will be sure to see that Miss Raymond is comfortable. You will, of course, let Jane sleep in your room, dear, at C——," continued Lady Fortrose, as Minna entered.

"Oh! but we are not going to sleep at C——, dear aunt. We shall travel all night. I am sure that Harry means to do so, that we may be as quick as possible. And," added she, in a lower tone, "I don't think I need take Jane; you know, with Harry, I shall get on perfectly well."

"Do you really think you can do without her comfortably, my dear? And then you will want her when you come back."

"I think not. I am almost sure I had better not take her. You see, I shall not want her at King's Holm."

"Well, just as you like, dear; but tell her what you wish, and then come to my room for a few last words."

Lady Fortrose went down-stairs.

Minna gave a few more directions to the maid, and quickly followed her aunt, whom she found alone.

"My darling, I can't bear to send you away, and on so sad an errand; but I do hope it may be a comfort to your dear mother to see you, and that you may have the great happiness of finding her already better."

"You think I may. You do not fear, then, that she is so very ill."

"From what Harry says, I see no positive necessity for fear; but it is doubtless a very serious, and possibly dangerous illness. I am thankful that you can be with them to-morrow. Bessie will, I am sure, look to you as a comforter, whatever happens; and, for yourself, remember, darling, you have a mother here too."

Minna kissed her aunt with tears in her eyes, and was soon in the carriage with her brother, who highly approved of her resolution not to encumber herself with a maid.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNEY.

Sure they of many blessings
Should scatter blessings round,
As laden boughs in autumn fling
Their ripe fruit to the ground.
And the best love man can offer
To the love of God be sure,
Is kindness to His little ones,
And bounty to His poor.

Baron's Little Daughter.

What God
Intended as a blessing and a boon
We have received as such; and we can say:—
A solemn, yet a joyful thing is life,
Which, being full of duties, is for this
Of gladness full, and full of lofty hopes.

R. C. TRENCH.

MINNA had now for the first time leisure to reflect on the events of the last hour. The news had been so sudden, and the preparations so hurried, that she could scarcely think of her journey till it was begun.

After a few minutes of thoughtful silence she turned to her brother, and said—

"I am so thankful that you came for me, Harry."

"I am very thankful that I was able to come," answered he, "and still more thankful to find you so willing to go."

"Did you doubt about it?" asked Minna.

"Why, you are almost a stranger, even to our mother."

"No, no, not a stranger. And you thought I should not wish to go. I am sorry you thought that;" and Minna's voice faltered.

"My dear child, I do not think it unnatural that your feelings should be warmest towards those who have brought you up. I see you have not forgotten home and the duty you owe there; but I should not blame you if you had."

"Oh, Harry! I should blame myself. I often think of my mother, and all of them at home, and I know I owe them duties and love, and I do love them all, you know; but, as to the duties, I am not wanted there at present. At least I was not until now, and you see I am ready."

"Yes, and I trust your readiness may be rewarded; but, Minna, I did not tell you all. The doctors said I must be quickly back to see my mother again alive."

"Alive! oh, Harry, is it so bad as that? And you came for me when you most longed to stay there—how good of you!"

"No, my mother asked for you, and I thought my coming would prevent any delay in your journey. I did it for her, Minna, but I would have done it for you."

"But you were coming before?"

"Yes; but my mother's illness would have kept me at home, of course, if you had not been in the case."

"And you can stay at home now?"

"For one more week I can. I thought I should have spent it with you at Pentyre."

"I was so looking forward to your visit, and I have

heard of you, too, from Lady Anne Arlington; she told me she met you in Italy."

"Yes, poor little thing! How is she now? They were on board my ship for a time, and I thought her so terribly neglected and unhappy."

"She is happier now, I think; but she is very anxious to return to Italy and to her father; but I am afraid her unhappiness was partly her own fault."

"You mean that it is owing to an unhappy temper; but, oh, Minna! I often think we should look on that with pity, rather than as a subject for blame. I believe no one who is blessed with a naturally cheerful and contented disposition, has any idea of the sufferings which a different temper will bring upon its unhappy possessor."

"But I do not mean to say Anne has a bad temper; it is not so much that as her want of trust in others, that, I think, makes her unhappy. She always seems doubtful whether people care about her, and really mean to be kind; so different to Bessie, who always thinks people a great deal kinder than they really are."

"Yes, I know what you mean. I often wish they could know each other; for I got very much interested in Lady Anne, partly from the remembrance of Bessie. If Lady Anne had had my mother instead of her own, and such a sister as Margaret, she would, I dare say, have been different."

"Yes; there is a great deal of good in her."

"But nobody seeks it, so there it lays concealed and uncultivated. Only think what a different case yours has been. Every idea of good has been watched and fostered in you, from your earliest dawn of intelligence, first by Margaret, and then by Honoria. If there be

such a thing as over-indulgence of goodness, I should say it has been shown to you. I don't mean that you were always good; but I know that every half-expressed thought to which you gave utterance has been, if possible, guided in a right direction by those around you, perhaps even before you really knew what was your own meaning, so that habits of right thinking were made to supersede the habits of wrong thinking, natural to every child. Do you know what I mean? Do you see this system carried out with Winifred and Geraldine?"

"Yes, I see it, and with it an immense responsibility for such rare advantages."

"Right. We have all an immense responsibility. Bessie has had in this respect equal advantages with you. She also has been carefully shielded from temptation and bad example, and so have I, in a most unusual degree."

"But how? I thought boys at school had more temptations than girls at home."

"So they have; but you know my school-days were very short, and I soon found myself where temptations are often far greater and more dangerous than at school. A midshipman's life is full of all sorts of temptations; but much depends on the captain under whom he is first placed, and Captain Astley was well aware of the responsibility of his position. He cared not only for the discipline of his ship—which, however, was always first-rate—but also for the welfare, in its highest sense, of every creature on board. He was strict, even called severe at times, but always just, always cool, and we all saw and understood that he condemned and punished offences against God far

more severely than those by which the laws of man only were transgressed; and he often said to us, that all the faults of insubordination, intemperance, &c., of which sailors might be guilty, spring but from disregard of God's commands, and that the best Christian will be the best sailor, for he can best afford to risk his life, and can least afford to neglect his duty.' He himself was a brilliant example of this truth. I always hope my career may be as far as is possible an imitation of his."

"Where is he now?" asked Minna.

"He died rather suddenly about three years ago, or I have no doubt he would have risen to eminence in the profession. I shall never forget what I owe to him."

Minna was quite sorry there was no hope of knowing her brother's excellent friend; but from this and many other conversations, she had learned before the journey was over to form a high estimate of that brother's character, and to regard him with that respect and admiration which lays the foundation of the most lasting love.

On the whole, she would have enjoyed the journey very much, but for its sad cause, and the unconfessed dread that they might, after all, be too late. But this trial was spared them. Mrs. Raymond had rallied unexpectedly, and though extremely weak, was considered to be out of immediate danger, unless a relapse should occur.

Minna was not permitted to see her mother on the first night of her arrival, it being too late for the invalid to be informed of her son's return; but warm and thankful were the greetings with which Rhoda

and Bessie welcomed the travellers, and Mr. Ray was evidently made much happier by Minna's pre though he often expressed his longing that Mar too could have been with him at this solemn painful time.

CHAPTER X.

ONCE MORE.

And years have passed away since then, and many a joy and care
Have filled by turns thy mother's heart, in which thou hadst no share;
But still within her heart she keeps one sacred spot for thee,
And thine, my lily, thine alone, that spot shall ever be.

To my Gathered Lily.

The world has kindly dealt, mother, by the child thou lov'st so well;
Thy prayers have circled round her path, and 'twas their holy spell
Which made that path so dearly bright, which showed the roses there,
Which gave the light, and cast the balm, on every breath of air.

I bear a happy heart, mother, a happier never beat,
And even now fresh buds of hope are bursting at my feet.
Oh, mother! life may be a dream, but if such dreams are given,
While at the portal thus we stand, what are the truths of Heaven?"

Anon.

MINNA saw her mother the next morning, and felt a deep glow of satisfaction on perceiving the pleased smile that lighted the pale face, when turned to meet the daughter who had been so little her own. But with the thought of death, and the strange realities it brings, the dearer truth of mother's love seemed to gain new force, and she had there, on that silent pillow, reviewed many scenes of Minna's infancy, and thought

of her as the golden-haired child, the parting with whom had caused so many regrets to her absent Margaret—for Mrs. Raymond's heart often recurred to Margaret, and with her the thought of Minna was connected now as in bygone years.

She lay gazing with love and admiration on Minna's face, and whispered her thankfulness for being permitted to see her again, and then making Minna kneel by the side of the bed, so that her face was on a level with the pillow, Mrs. Raymond talked to her for some time in a low but distinct tone.

It was the first time Minna had had a confidential conversation with her mother; but now it seemed quite natural, for the fifteen years that had passed since she left home were forgotten, and Mrs. Raymond only felt that Minna was her own child and Margaret's darling.

"Oh, Minna, I must tell you, as no one else can, what Margaret felt for you. You will see her again, though perhaps not for a long time, but you must not meet as strangers. She was more to you than I could be, even while you were still my own child; and, though you cannot remember it, I tell you now, that you may know by my word, and never forget it. I should have blessed God that I might see her once more, had He so willed it; but she will be glad, very glad, dear, to hear that you were with me at last, and it will be a link between you—a link for grown-up life, that might have been wanting. When she returns to England, Minna, you must claim her as a sister; let her never think that in the brilliant prosperity which may be your lot, you do not want the friendship of the sister who would once have been willing to give

up her own happiness for your sake, and, though you have friends now who love you as their own child, and who are firmly purposed never to forsake you, yet, life's changes are so unaccountable, so much may happen that none of us could ever foretell or provide for, that you may yet find in Margaret what you can find in no other. You will seek her friendship, will you not?"

Minna promised willingly and heartily.

"And you will write to her? Write while you are here."

"I will, dearest mother. I will always look to her as to a true and unchanged friend; after all, we are sisters, so I have a right to her, and I love to think so."

"Yes, you are sisters, though that tie has almost been broken," said Mrs. Raymond, in a sad tone.

"No, dearest mother, not broken, that can never be. You did but lend me to Honoria; I am your own child still."

"God bless you, dear! Yes, I lent you to Honoria, because I wished to give you a brighter lot than you would have had here; and you are very happy, my child; I have gained for you what I wished, have I not? Have you had a happy life, Minna?" And Mrs. Raymond looked an anxious inquiry into that fair young face.

"Oh, yes, mamma, so happy, too happy; no life, I think, was ever what mine has been at Pentyre; I do not deserve it, and sometimes I think I ought not to be there. You do not know what a life of sunshine you chose for me, and my sisters would have been far more worthy."

"Yes, you have been happy, thank God; and may

it please Him to let your happy life continue. If you thank Him for it all, you are safe, dearest; but never forget to thank Him. While you have been absent all these years, I have never ceased praying for your happiness, and He has heard the prayer. Be sure, my darling, to ask Him for all you want, and never forget to thank Him. 'He will do you good and not evil all the days of your life;' it is your mother who bids you remember that always."

Mrs. Raymond laid her head back on the pillow, exhausted with the effort she had made to say to Minna what had been so much on her heart. Minna remained watching till her mother fell asleep, when Rhoda came to take her usual place by the bedside, and Minna went to her own room. Margaret's room they had given her, and how glad she was to be alone there. She sat down to think, or rather to arrange her thoughts before writing to Lady Fortrose. But the task was not easy; it seemed already a long time since she had left her aunt; and yet only one day had passed; was it possible?

"I feel quite a different person from what I did the day before yesterday," soliloquized Minna; "the day before yesterday what was I doing? Oh, the ice! Anne! Hazelby! the hiding-place afterwards! How quickly all was gone; yes, quite gone, it seemed!" and she looked round the room, and thought of Margaret. "Shall I see her again? and does she still care much about me? Her children now must have put me out of her heart, but I hope not quite. It is a great blessing to belong, really to belong, to people. I love my aunt; oh, so deeply, that I have wished I were her own child; I hope it is not wrong; but I never knew

my own mother loved me so much," and the tears came into Minna's eyes, and rolled unchecked down her cheeks. "What a blessing that I could tell her I have been so happy; it would have grieved her to hear I had not; and yet—poor, dear mother! was it a mistake? and shall I live to find it out? Thank God, I do not yet know it! Oh, no, I do not, indeed; I am not so ungrateful; and yet I almost feel as if Rhoda and Bessie were safer than I am; they are where God first placed them, and are happy and useful and contented. Happy! oh, but not as I have been! I always know when I am happy, and have such a living, clear consciousness of it, which seems to double its brightness. I never heard of a life going on like that always. My aunt is very happy, but then she had a sad childhood, for I have heard her say that when her father died, and Lady St. Melion married again, she felt as if she had nobody belonging to her, and she was very lonely and often unhappy till she married, and then, too, she felt so much about her very own relations, that was what made her first think of taking me. Then there is Beatrice, she is not particularly happy; nor Anne, certainly; and yet I am. I wonder if it will last? My dear mother almost seemed to doubt, though she wished it, and I feel afraid. I think there is truth in that line I read the other day—

"There is even a happiness that makes the heart afraid."

And with a grave shadow on her heart, Minna began her letter. She had much to tell. First, of course, of her safe and timely journey; and here she gave her aunt some idea of the pleasure Harry's society had been. Then followed a full account of her mother's

state, in which appeared Minna's thankful joy at being with her, to be thus at the last acknowledged among her children; but these feelings recalled Minna's devotion to Lady Fortrose, and many an expression of deep and fervent love bore witness to the contending affections in the heart of the young writer. Of her sisters Minna said little, having as yet had but little time to see them; and she shortened her letter purposely, that she might go down and talk to Bessie, and hear the doctor's opinion of her mother, for she heard him come up-stairs while she was writing. His opinion was only the sad but simple one, that while strength lasted life would last, but he prepared them to believe that the already failing powers could scarcely outlast another week. Minna added this sad intimation to her letter, which she had kept unclosed for the purpose, and then she returned to Bessie.

Poor Bessie was crying bitterly. She had been in her mother's room, and, having almost overtasked her strength in the effort to suppress every emotion, was now completely unnerved, and sobbed so violently that Minna was frightened for her. At length, after Minna had broken off suddenly in her attempts to soothe Bessie, and was at last obliged to give way to her own tears, Bessie, looked up and whispered—

"My darling Minna, what it is to have you now!"

Minna could not answer; her heart was very full; not as Bessie's, of one great absorbing grief, but of so many mixed and agitating feelings that she could only cry, and crying was a great relief. She was tired, too, with her long night journey, and though angry with herself for her weakness, she was glad to accede to Bessie's proposal, and lie down on the sofa, to rest both

body and mind, for Bessie offered to read to her; and that soft voice succeeded admirably in the work of consolation, for in a quarter of an hour Minna was fast asleep.

And now Bessie stopped reading, and sat there looking at the face she so much loved and admired.

Minna was one of the few people who look very pretty in sleep. Although in general her eyes were the greatest attraction her face possessed, from their ever-varying and truth-speaking expression, yet when they were closed, and the long bending lashes lay on her cheek, one did not miss the hidden brightness; perhaps it was because she had beautifully marked eyebrows; much darker they were than her hair, which had only changed from the golden hue it wore in childhood to a bright brown, as of beech leaves in autumn, so threaded and sunned with gold still, that one hardly knew how deep a brown it really had assumed. It was rich, too, in quantity, and had the rippling wave which gives a look of life to that fine sensitive sort of hair. Her mouth, too, seemed fuller of expression in repose, or rather, when as now, the eyes did not draw off the attention of the observer, and Bessie looked on—a pleased smile dawning on her lips, instantly succeeded by a quick sigh. But no return to the thought of her mother's state prompted the sigh; that was a thought ever present, which had spread its calm sadness over Bessie's soul, till patient resignation to God's will was the only feeling in which she awaited the impending blow. The sigh was all about Minna.

How lovely, how pure she looked. How happy were those she loved, and to whom she would soon

return; then came the quick sigh; Bessie could not hope to keep her even now. "No, and I would not if I could," thought Bessie, "for they, at least some of them, love her as I do; and there she is as she ought to be, she has what she ought to have. But, oh! when she goes! when my mother!—ah! Minna will not care to come again only for Rhoda and me—perhaps this will be the last time," and Bessie looked again at Minna, and again smiled at the fair sight. Then she rose, and left the room as quietly as she could.

"Where is Minna?" said Mr. Raymond, when dinner was announced.

"She was very tired, papa, and I left her asleep on the sofa in my room," replied Bessie.

"Shall not something be kept warm for her," said Harry.

"Yes, certainly. Poor child! it was a tiring journey, and she is not used to rough it."

"I think the agitation and hurry have probably done as much towards tiring her as the journey, which in itself is easy; but you must take care of her and yourself too, Bessie," said Harry, kindly, "and I can tell you Minna is a jewel that has not even been spoiled by its rich setting."

"No! bless her," said Mr. Raymond, sadly.

Rhoda now came down with a report of the dear invalid, who had insisted on her watchful daughter joining the party at dinner. Minna's absence was explained, and Rhoda was satisfied on that point, but said, rather mournfully, that she had scarcely seen her yet. Certainly she had been too much engaged with her mother, but Rhoda always felt a little hurt at the idea that *Minna* preferred Bessie; not that this was really the

case, but the two younger sisters, though so different, did suit very well, as had always appeared, and Rhoda was apt to forget that her various avocations in the house had often prevented her seeing as much of Minna as either would have wished.

As soon as dinner was over, however, Rhoda sought Minna, and found her not in Bessie's room, but in her own, whither she had gone to re-arrange her hair before going down stairs.

Rhoda went with her to the dining-room, which was now empty, and they sat there talking long after Minna had finished the dinner that had been carefully put aside for her.

Rhoda gave a long and detailed account of the beginning of her mother's illness, which it appeared was not altogether so sudden as Minna had believed, for Mrs. Raymond had had a somewhat similar attack, though in a much slighter degree, about three weeks before, "and it left her," Rhoda said, "weaker than we had any idea of. But she made light of it, and would not let us tell you."

"I wish I had known it," said Minna.

"Perhaps it might have been better; but mamma had such a dread of making you unhappy, and yet at last she was so anxious to have you."

"Oh! I should have been far more unhappy at knowing she was ill and not coming. What a terrible thing it is that Harry must go so soon."

"Yes," said Rhoda. "I really don't know what we shall do. Nobody can comfort papa like Harry. Mr. Thorburn is most kind, and Frank comes whenever he can; but Harry has so much more influence than any one else, and papa depends so on him."

"But who is Mr. Thorburn?"

"Why, he is the clergyman at Naylehurst. Don't you remember? Where Frank is curate."

"Oh, yes; but I never heard the name of the rector before. How fortunate Frank was in getting that."

"Yes. You see he and Mr. Thorburn were at school together. At least Mr. Thorburn was one of the head boys when Frank first went, and they met again at college; so when Mr. Thorburn got this living he offered Frank the curacy as a title for Orders, and now he has been there nearly three years."

Frank's own voice being just then heard, Minna went into the drawing-room to see him, while Rhoda returned to her mother, promising to send word down if she were able to see Frank.

Not many minutes elapsed before Rhoda came down again, looking hurried and anxious. "Where is my father?"

"Here. What is it?" said Mr. Raymond, rising.

"She seems so much weaker. Shall we send for Dr. Lowe?"

"I will go for him," said Frank.

"Do, my dear boy;" and Frank was off in a moment.

Mr. Raymond went up to his wife's room. Minna and Bessie remained together. Neither spoke. Minna sat with her eyes fixed on the window, watching for Frank's return. Presently a figure passed; it was Harry. Minna went out to meet him, and tell him of the new anxiety. He came in and sat down with the sisters, waiting. In a few minutes Dr. Lowe and Frank appeared at the garden-gate together. Then Harry went out; Minna followed him to the door, and

saw the doctor shake his head in answer to something Harry had said. What it was she could not hear, but Dr. Lowe was an honest man and a Christian, and would not give hope where hope was not. It was too true. In a few minutes Minna and Bessie were summoned, and before the night closed in they had parted from their mother for ever on this earth.

CHAPTER XI.

PLANS.

Farewell! farewell! the voice you hear
Hast left its last soft tones with you;
It next must join the seaward cheer,
And shout among the shouting crew.
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

ANOTHER parting? Not, perhaps, for so long a time, but rendered doubly sad by that which had preceded it.

The funeral was over, the evening had closed in, and Captain Raymond was preparing for his departure. He had to be at Portsmouth early the following day, and was to rejoin his ship now lying there, but under orders to sail. He took leave of his sisters before they separated for the night, as he must leave home before daybreak. Minna had a few more kind thoughtful words from him. He asked how long she would remain at King's Holm. Minna could not say; she must find out what her father wished.

"And Honoria," said Harry, "shall you not consult her too?"

"Oh yes; but she will, of course, wish me to do as my father desires."

"But you must not suppose, from anything I have said, that I do not recognise the claims she has upon you; and though my father and sisters will doubtless wish to keep you as long as possible, you will be missed at your own home."

Her own home. He said it on purpose, and Minna looked up at him, feeling grateful. He went on quietly, however—"So I shall not expect to hear of your remaining here beyond a month or two; but you will write to me, and I will answer your letters when I can, and as long as I can; but you know there are chances at sea, if indeed there be chance in anything."

"Oh, but Harry! you need not talk about that. I will certainly write, and shall consider it a great honour to have a letter from you; but I suppose you will seldom be able to do more than write home, and I can always have news of you in that way."

"Yes; so you will write without always looking for an answer; I shall not hear much of you, unless from yourself. Tell Honoria I am very sorry not to have seen more of her and Lord Fortrose. I wished so much to know them well for your sake."

Rhoda and Bessie were much distressed at parting with Harry; Frank, also, who had remained with them that evening, was very unhappy, and Mr. Raymond did not leave his study, where Harry spent the greater part of the evening with him.

Frank was the only one of the party who saw Harry on the following morning. He accompanied him to the station, and only parted from him as the train moved off.

The elder brother was so much more in their father's confidence than Frank had ever been, and now Frank despaired of being able to give him any of that support and comfort which he knew Harry would have afforded.

He told his brother his fears, and received a few kind but hurried words of encouragement, ending with,

"Try. Do your best, and God will help you all." And the train started. Frank watched it till it was out of sight, and then turned slowly and sorrowfully along a lane in the direction of Naylehurst. And Captain Raymond returned to his duty as if nothing unusual had marked his stay at home; and if his sorrow ever betrayed itself, it was by an increased tenderness to those who were in any trouble—for he had truly and deeply loved his mother, and had felt most severely the trial of being unable to stay and comfort his father now.

And Minna stayed at home. No word was said at present about her return to Pentyre. Lady Fortrose did not allude to it in her letters, which, however, seemed now full of a more motherly love than she had ever expressed before.

Rhoda and Bessie, who would have felt very deeply the painful return to every-day life, with the one dear interest missing, were in a great measure relieved by the novelty of Minna's presence, from constant sad reminiscences, and at the same time found in her a most willing listener whenever they were inclined to dwell upon the past; every circumstance of her mother's life having now assumed an extraordinary importance in Minna's eyes.

Soon the little household settled down in the calm acceptance of what must be.

Rhoda and Minna took long walks together, for the weather was too cold for Bessie to venture out, and Minna learned to admire the lanes and commons about King's Holm, which are picturesque even in winter, from the fine trees with which they abound.

"You should see it in the summer," said Rhoda one

day when Minna expressed her admiration of the scene before them.

"By-the-bye, Minna, I suppose you will not be here in the summer?"

"I hope I may be able to come—I should like it so much."

"To come? Then you are thinking of going away? Is that what Honoria's long letter was about this morning?"

"No," said Minna, "she said nothing about it; but I think I ought to return to her soon; and Miss Forbes has been in London for her holidays, and is going back the first week in March, so I could go with her, you see."

"Yes, that would be a very good opportunity. I am glad you will stay over this month. I thought you were going to say you must go this week."

"Oh, no! There is still a fortnight, and I shall be so sorry when it comes to an end. How I wish you and Bessie could come to Pentyre."

"Ah, I am afraid that is impossible. Bessie could not well go, and I could not leave her and papa, so we must wait till she grows stronger. But now we have seen so much more of you we can write more easily, and I feel too that I know more about all at Pentyre, so your letters will be more interesting, because we shall know what you are thinking and caring about. There is one thing I wonder at, Minna, and that is that you don't have more to do with schools and poor people. You must have plenty of time for it."

"Yes, now I am out of the school-room I have, and you know I have taught for years in the Sunday-school, but the village is so far off, and all along the high road,

so that I cannot go there alone; but when I go home I will really try and interest Beatrice in it if she stays."

"Or Lady Anne," said Rhoda. "Would it not be a good thing for her?"

"Yes, very good; but I am afraid she will not be at Pentyre long. She will probably be gone before I return, as Lady St. Melion was to rejoin her husband in the spring."

"And will Beatrice stay?"

"I think so; but I am not sure how it is settled."

"How they must miss you," said Rhoda.

"I hope they do," answered Minna, with a smile.

After a pause Minna began again. "Rhoda, do you think papa will remain at King's Holm. He said something to Frank the other night about the lease of the house being out at Midsummer."

"I should not be surprised if he were to change after that. There are many things he does not like here, and the place will always be sad [illegible] now. It would be very different if it were ou[illegible], but you see papa has no interest in it, [illegible] near may be an inducem[illegible] is hoping to get a livin[illegible]

"Do you think an[illegible] well as this does?"

"I think a r[illegible] Devonshira[illegible]

"But [illegible] too far[illegible]

"[illegible] b[illegible]

"No; I am very fond of this county, and I had much rather stay here. On my own account, of course, I mean; but I shall not advise papa to stay."

"Shall you advise him to go?"

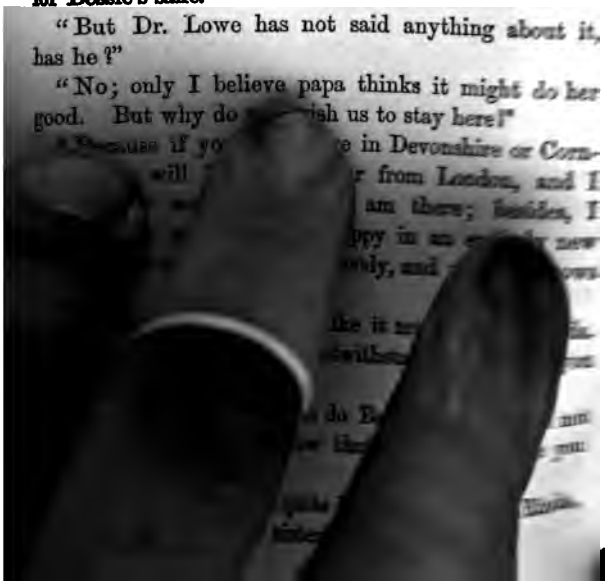
"I had much rather not advise him at all, and I daresay he will not need advice, for he is sure to consult Harry. Papa never does anything important without consulting him since Margaret went."

"But, Rhoda, you will of course have to give an opinion on such a subject, and I do hope you will beg papa to remain here."

"Do you?" said Rhoda, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes; why are you surprised?"

"I thought, of course, you would wish us to move for Bessie's sake."


"But Dr. Lowe has not said anything about it, has he?"
"No; only I believe papa thinks it might do her good. But why do
ish us to stay here?"
in Devonshire or Corn-
from London, and I
am there; besides, I

"Why, Rhoda, how odd you are; of course I should be very happy to see her well and strong."

"Yes, but you said quite happy. Now one may be very happy that one's sisters are in good health, and yet not be quite happy in every possible way, that's what I feel about it."

Rhoda was not in the habit of saying very new or striking things, and certainly this speech was neither new nor striking, yet, of all the conversations the sisters had together this was the one that most frequently recurred to Minna's memory in after days.

CHAPTER XII.

EASTER.

The flower is but a little thing,
It perfumes all the gales of spring;
God feeds it with His dewdrops bright.
And never yet the heart has beat
Too poor, too lowly, too unmeet
To do its proper part aright;
Nor hand has been too weak, too small
To work for Him who works for all.

Baron's Little Daughter.

Time on my brow hath set his seal;
I start to find myself a man,
And know that I no more shall feel
As only boyhood's spirit can.

MOULTRIE.

THE fortnight soon passed away.

Lady Fortrose had joyfully hailed Minna's proposal to return with Miss Forbes, and Mr. Raymond was only too thankful to have been able to keep her so long. It was also arranged that if Lady Fortrose came to London after Easter, and brought Winifred, Minna should then pay another visit to King's Holm, as she could not go out in London this year.

Great were the rejoicings at Minna's return to Pentyre, and it was well that she had not deferred it longer, as she would in that case have missed seeing some of her friends.

Lady Elizabeth was gone, and Lady St. Melion was

intending to start for Italy at the end of the month. Anne was delighted at the idea of returning to her father, but would have been very sorry to leave Pentyre without seeing Minna again. Beatrice was to remain with Lady Fortrose, who intended to take her to London after Easter. But of all who welcomed Minna home again, no one was more really happy than Winifred.

"Oh, Minna! how I have missed you! All day, and every day; yes, even while Miss Forbes was here, but still more after she went, because when I have no lessons to do I have so much time for seeing you, and the holidays seemed quite wasted this time. But really I think Anne missed you nearly as much as I did;" and then came a long account of what they had all been doing, and all that had gone on since Minna left, with a faithful report of the many times that everybody had said "I wish Minna were here." All of which was as pleasant for Minna to hear as for Winifred to repeat, perhaps even more pleasant, for is not the feeling of being loved and missed singularly delightful?

Minna and her aunt had a long talk together in the sitting-room, which was the best place for an uninterrupted conversation with Lady Fortrose. All that had passed at King's Holm was most interesting to her, and she was deeply touched when Minna related her mother's question about the happy life.

"Thank God, indeed, my darling," said Lady Fortrose, "that you were able to give such an answer."

Minna felt very sad when she spoke of Rhoda and Bessie, and their desolate position; Lady Fortrose was full of sympathy for them, and expressed a hope of

seeing them if she went to London; "but," added she, "I do not know that I shall go after all, as your uncle does not care about it; should you be sorry to stay here all the summer, Minna?"

"Sorry! oh, no; but what will you do then about Beatrice?"

"I have been talking to my mother about it, and she thinks she could take her to London and present her before Easter, as there is to be a drawing-room, and then leave her for a few weeks with Lady Elizabeth, who will be very glad to take her out. And Hazelby has written to propose himself here, and would be dreadfully disappointed if we were gone to London, and I should be sorry to go, because if he comes he will probably stay some time, as he does not reside at Oxford after this term; and if he does not come here, he will be all alone at Athenry."

"But I thought he was going to Italy."

"Yes, but not till the long vacation."

"I hope Rhoda and Bessie will not be terribly disappointed at my not going to London, but I did tell them I should probably stay here if you left Winifred."

"My dear child, you don't think I should have left you here with only Winifred?"

"But we used to stay."

"Yes, when you were a child too, but I should not like now to go to London and leave you here, unless it were for a very short time. Do you think Rhoda and Bessie would perhaps come here in the summer? We should be so quiet, you know."

Minna looked doubtful.

"Well, we can think of that when the summer comes; but now are you sure you would not rather go

to London, because even if I do not go, my mother would take charge of you, and then you could go to King's Holm till Beatrice comes back here again; and you would have a month here first."

"Oh, no, no! dearest auntie, I should be sorry to go without you; I had much rather stay here; the quiet time with you will be so delightful; you do not think I ought to go?"

"No, dear, and I shall be most thankful to have you here; I have missed my 'eldest child' terribly during the last two months." And Lady Fortrose passed her hand lovingly over the soft waves of shining hair, on which the fire-light was casting a golden glow, for Minna sat on a footstool, her favourite position, leaning against Lady Fortrose's knee.

There is something very tender in the feeling conveyed by the gentle touch of a hand on the hair; Minna felt it, and in her warm happy consciousness of being loved, there was mingled a sad recollection of the "vanished hand" that was no more to gladden Rhoda and Bessie with its touch. A bright tear fell on her lap. Lady Fortrose saw it, and guessed the train of thought from which it sprang.

"Poor Bessie!" said she, "and poor Rhoda! Perhaps Rhoda is the most to be pitied, for Bessie has been used to look up to her, and Rhoda was quite your dear mother's friend and helper."

"Rhoda is very useful to all of them now, and I think the knowledge of that does her good; but if they had any comfort like I have, how glad I should be. It seems quite wrong to be so much happier than they are."

"*No,* dearest; God gives you this happiness, so it

cannot be wrong; only thank him for it, and then you will be always safe."

"Those were my mother's words. How strange that you should have repeated them."

"Were they your mother's? I am glad you heard them from her. From my first acquaintance with earthly happiness—and that is from the beginning of my married life, Minna, for I had not, as you know, a happy childhood, being left entirely to the charge of a governess who could not sympathise with me—from the first day then that I felt what wonderful happiness God can bestow, I felt unsafe unless I daily and hourly thanked Him for every blessing, and for the consciousness of my own enjoyment, and so I believe all has been doubled to me. It is a great thing to observe all our blessings; to speak of them, if only to God, and so we keep them fresh and bright; otherwise people lose the consciousness of their advantages, and of course cannot rejoice in what they have forgotten, or be grateful for benefits they do not perceive. I believe, my dear Minna, that this sort of acknowledgment of your own happiness has been one cause of the sunshine of heart that I always see in you, and God grant, my dearest child, that it never may be clouded."

So it was settled. Beatrice was rather disappointed at hearing that Lady Elizabeth, not Lady Fortrose, was to take her out this year; but to counterbalance this, came the pleasure of being presented by her mother, which was more suitable according to Beatrice's notions of etiquette, besides the satisfaction Lady St. Melion evidently felt in the arrangement, though she had not at first thought of it.

Anne was very much interested about Minna's

sisters, and insisted that when she was in London she would go and see them.

"I shall have nothing else to do, and mamma will be taking Beatrice about calling on people, and I hate paying visits, or sitting in the carriage while other people pay them."

"But you know you could not go alone to King's Holm."

"Well, then, I'll get somebody to go with me."

This, of course, was unanswerable, but Anne did not go. "She did not care about London, so why should she go there at all?" Lady Fortrose said; "and more than that, she was extremely happy at Pentyre, so why not let her stay till Lady St. Melion left England?" Anne was delighted at the proposal; Minna had never seen her so excited as when she rushed into the school-room, using her crutches with wonderful activity, and exclaiming,

"Here is a blessing! a real blessing! Oh, Minna, here you are at last. I could not find you, so I came to tell Winifred. I am not going to London. I am to stay here till mamma goes to Italy. I am so glad. And now I shall see Hazelby again, too." And she sat down, breathless and bright, on the nearest chair.

"Oh, I am very glad," said Winifred.

"Yes, that is a charming plan. I wonder it was not thought of before," said Minna.

"How glad Hazelby will be," exclaimed Geraldine; "he said he could not bear people going away, when Minna went, and now if he came and found Beatrice and Anne both gone, what would he say? And I was so sorry you must go, Anne, and so was Miss Forbes."

"I doubt that," said Anne, in a low voice.

"Then, Lady Anne," said Miss Forbes, who had not heard the last words, "you can learn the duet with Winifred."

"Yes, if you like," said Anne, who was very fond of music, but had, as usual, taken up an idea that Miss Forbes did not like her, and therefore punished herself by not playing with Winifred as much as she wished.

"Yes, do," said Winifred. "We were saying this morning how pleasant it was to have you in the school-room, for playing, and drawing, and everything."

"Were you? I wish I could have somebody in the school-room with me when I have this new governess whom mamma is to find in London; it is so dull doing lessons alone."

"Well, I don't know," said Beatrice; "I always did them alone, and I got on somehow."

"I suppose I shall get on somehow; but that means anyhow, which I can't bear."

"Ah, you are so particular."

"I am afraid I am not particular enough," said Miss Forbes, "in keeping to lessons at lesson hours. I really must be uncivil enough to send you away," she continued, addressing Beatrice and Minna.

"Am I to go too?" said Anne.

"Oh no, you are one of my pupils," said Miss Forbes, with a smile; and the two elder young ladies left the room, which soon regained its usual quietness.

Lady St. Melion and Beatrice went to London at the end of March, but they left a happy party behind them.

Minna felt doubly thankful to be much alone with her aunt, for since Beatrice came to live with

them this had very seldom been the case, and Minna most truly valued the privilege which was now often hers.

Lord Hazelby, finding that Lady Fortrose meant to remain at Pentyre, put off his visit till he should have spent a day or two with his mother and sister in London; but not all Beatrice's persuasions could induce him to prolong his stay above a week, as he must read, and besides he hated London when he might be by the sea.

So he was at Pentyre early in April, in time for that brightest of holy days, Easter Sunday.

What a happy day that was to Minna. She and Lord Fortrose and Hazelby walked home from church together.

It was a real spring morning, warm and full of life, and of promises such as life seldom sees fulfilled. The church was rather more than a mile from the castle, and the road lay round wooded cliffs, with a view of the sea below, only here and there intercepted by plantations of firs and other evergreens, whose unfading colour gave an appearance of more advanced spring to the whole prospect.

The sea was deeply blue, and the larches were waving in a light wind their boughs of tenderest green.

The walk was such an one as must have given pleasure to an admirer of nature's colouring, even without companions to share the enjoyment; but who shall say what a walk that was to Minna, in the loveliest season of the year, on the brightest day, and with the companions whom she would have chosen, had she dared to make such a choice? Yes, she would have *chosen* Lord Fortrose, because she understood him so

thoroughly, and knew how he enjoyed all this beauty, though his enjoyment was of a different kind to hers; and she would have chosen Hazelby, or at least wished to choose him, because she always felt that he understood her.

He had expressed great pleasure at finding her at Pentyre on his return, and some anxiety lest she should be going away with Lord Fortrose after Easter; but when he became aware of the family arrangements, he told her he should read most studiously now all the morning, that he might have time to enjoy musical evenings again, now she was there to sing.

"You speak as if you had been ill-used; did not Beatrice sing to you in the winter?"

"Yes; but you must recollect, Miss Raymond, that I have been since then, all these melancholy weeks, at Oxford, living the life of an anchorite, with not a 'voice of song' to cheer me. But seriously, it is a great comfort that you are come back, for my only fear in coming down here to read was, that I should become so absorbed in books as to forget real life and my duty to my neighbours, and I depend upon you to save me from that catastrophe, and also from another equally great danger, though of an opposite description."

"What, from thinking too much of your neighbours, as that is the opposite to not thinking enough about them."

"Exactly. I also feared that if the weather was fine, and the spring looked and felt as only spring can look and feel, I should be tempted to limit my studies to Spenser and the "Stones of Venice," and make all lovely scenery my reading-room; and now there is added to this temptation that you have mentioned of

thinking too much about my neighbours, for if you and my sister make yourselves very agreeable, I may at times forget Sismondi and Blackstone. Will you remind me of them?"

"I do not think you will want reminding, if you are so anxious to remember?"

"Oh, but I shall; and it would be very foolish of me to lose time now, if I am to have any hope of taking honours in the autumn."

"Hope! You mean to do it, do you not?"

"If I can, my father wishes it so much. So you will help me, will you not?"

"Oh yes, if I can. But it is not only your father's wish. Surely you wish it yourself. I am sure I should if I were you."

"Should you? Why?" asked Hazelby, smiling.

"Because it is the highest thing to do at Oxford, and I always should wish to do the highest thing whatever it might be."

"Why?" again asked Hazelby.

"Why?" repeated Minna, half-puzzled; "why, is it not best?"

"Granting that, why is it best?'

"I can only say, because it is right."

"How like you! I observe that you always bring a subject in discussion round to the matter-of-fact question of right and wrong; but I do not see how you are to prove (independently, of course, of my father's desire) that I should be right to take honours at Oxford, and, consequently, of course, wrong not to do it."

"I did not mean—to take them; I meant—to try," said Minna.

"Well, and how do you prove that right?"

"'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might,'" said Minna, in a low grave tone.

Hazelby was silent. Presently he said—

"Do you always go to the Bible for advice, Minna? I never hear you quote it."

"I should not know right and wrong without it," said Minna, "but I consult it for myself, not to teach others; that is not my province."

"Is it your province to teach me, then?"

"You asked me to help you," said Minna, in a very low voice, and then she looked up in his face, blushing scarlet, for she thought he was offended. One glance undeceived her, but she looked down again and remained silent, wishing she had not spoken so earnestly, for, with that look she remembered that he was a man now, and she had forgotten it, and had talked on as if he were the mere boy of last summer's boating days, for she had seen so little of him in the winter that the change had come unawares, and Minna resolved not to forget it again, and wished he would speak to make her sure he was not offended. He did speak.

"Talking of teaching" (Minna's cheeks glowed again), "do you not think the school-children could be taught to sing better in church? there seem to be some pretty voices among them, but they have such bad tunes, and they pitch them so much too high."

"Yes," said Minna; "I have often wished something could be done about it. I really might, perhaps, be able to assist in teaching them better, and it would be a good way to introduce myself."

"Introduce yourself? But you teach there already, do you not? You were there this morning, I thought."

"Yes, but that is all. I only teach in the Sunday-school, and I have been thinking of going there on week-days, too."

"I wish you would, at least for the singing; it really is excruciating sometimes.

"I shall not be of much use in teaching them, though, if I do not make up my mind to hear a great deal that is excruciating."

"Yes, that is true; but they would soon follow your voice, would not they?"

"Well, I don't know. I have never tried to teach singing; but if I find it very hard work, I can easily apply for assistance to the possessor of a stronger voice than mine."

"Who, the schoolmistress? Can she sing? Then she really ought to have taught them better."

"She cannot sing," said Minna, "but you can."

"I! you don't mean to enlist me as a singing-master?"

"Why not? You might be very useful."

"I doubt it; and, besides, I have not time. You forget what I told you just now. Or, perhaps, you thought I was not in earnest?"

"I think, at least I hope, you are in earnest about working hard, though you did not seem to acknowledge any duty in doing so."

"No. I fancy I work for love where you would work for duty. I believe you would do your duty at whatever cost, and I should not if I found it too disagreeable; but fortunately in this case what you consider my duty consorts to a certain degree with my pleasure, for I wish to satisfy my father, and I have perhaps the smallest spark of ambition besides, which will at least prompt me to try and avoid a defeat.

Now, as a reward for this concession to your principles, will you promise to try and improve the choir?"

"To prove your rash assertion about my doing disagreeable duties."

"No, no; I should be the last person to impose them upon you; but would it be so very tiresome?"

"Not if I look on it as a duty," said Minna.

"That would make it worse."

"No, I think not. One soon learns to love a duty, and this one would combine much pleasure, in being useful to the children and an improvement in the Church service."

"A vast improvement if they all learn to sing like you. What a choir it would be! You would deserve a handsome testimonial."

"Which it would be against my principles to accept," said Minna, laughing.

"Principles again," said Hazelby; "are you ever guided by anything else?"

"Yes; sometimes, I fear, by prejudice, though not when I know it."

"I thought women were always guided by feeling?"

"Well, that becomes prejudice, does it not, unless modified by judgment?"

"Yes, if it is not immediately active, when it takes the form of impulse. I suppose you would never forgive yourself for acting on the impulse of the moment?"

"Then I must often be on very bad terms with myself."

"But you surely consider it dangerous?"

"It may be so, certainly, but it also may be unavoidable and most valuable."

"I am glad you allow that."

"Have I ever said anything that would make you doubt my allowing it?"

"Perhaps not; but I have heard good people, who believe, like you, that everything should be done on principle, talk as if those good actions that one sometimes hears of, as springing from the impulse of a moment, were so utterly worthless in the sight of God, that they had almost better not be done. For instance, when a man falls overboard, and another jumps overboard to save him, he may be a bad man, and nothing but the natural impulse to save a fellow-creature may prompt him to risk his own life in this manner, yet I contend that such an action must be pleasing to God."

"Oh yes! for is it not God who has given him that intuitive desire to save life, and expects him to use it? but still, you will allow that a premeditated act of self-immolation and heroism is more prized even by ourselves generally. Where, for instance, shall we find the hero of sudden or momentary catastrophe awakening in our hearts the intense respect and devoted admiration which we feel for those gallant soldiers who stood calmly awaiting, on the deck of the *Birkenhead*, the awful and certain approach of death to which they had voluntarily doomed themselves, rather than endanger the lives of women and children?"

The tears sprang to Minna's eyes as she spoke. Hazelby looked at her, deeply touched by her enthusiastic description.

"Yes," said he, "it was very grand; they were true Englishmen."

"Oh! if I were very rich!" said Minna, with a sigh of despair.

"What would you do?" asked Hazelby, with a smile.

"Put up in the cathedral of Cape Town the most splendid monument I could have made, with an inscription worthy of those heroic soldiers."

"I had no idea you had such an enthusiasm for soldiers."

"I have not. You know my brother is a sailor; but I always hope, if he had been there, he would have done as those men did."

"And died?"

"As they did," said Minna.

"Then you could give him up so easily?"

"I should love him and glory in his memory till I met him again, and so do those sisters whose brothers were there, I hope."

"You are right, I think, about the monument. I shall remember it as a thing to be done, if I ever have the power."

"Shall you?" said Minna, joyfully, but she suddenly checked herself, adding, "only I think a woman ought to do it; they died to save women."

"Yes, you are right again; but that is no reason I should not keep it in mind. But here we are actually at home."

"What has become of my uncle?"

"He stopped at the lodge, you know, and told us to go on; and perhaps he never thought of our going by the cliff, and went straight across the park."

This was exactly the case, and Lord Fortrose had been at home a quarter of an hour when Minna and Hazelby entered; but luncheon was only just announced, and Minna did not repent of her long and very delightful walk.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUMMER HOURS.

Dear scenes of many a sportive hour,
Here thy own mountains hugely tower,
'Midst their grey rocks no glen so rude,
But thou hast lov'd its solitude;
No path so wild but thou hast known,
And traced its rugged course alone.

MRS. HEMANS.

MINNA gained Lady Fortrose's willing consent and co-operation in the plan for giving the school-children singing lessons, and the success was greater than had been anticipated.

Lady Fortrose not being musical herself, had not concerned herself about the matter, and it was more ignorance than incapacity on the part of the children that had caused the faults of which Hazelby so bitterly complained.

Minna took great pains, and found real pleasure in the improvement that soon rewarded her efforts. She attempted only simple hymns, but these were sung accurately, and to familiar and well-chosen tunes, and the congregation began to take some interest in a part of the service with which they had hitherto fancied they had no concern. Nor did Minna limit her instructions to the singers; she now began to attend the school with great regularity, though only once a week as the singing and her own home avocations prevented

her going more often, but this participation in their week-day duties assisted her materially with her Sunday scholars, and it was with great satisfaction that she was able to write and tell Rhoda how useful her hint had been. The fortnight of Anne's reprieve having passed away, she joined her mother in London, and was soon on her way south, accompanied also by an English governess whom, though somewhat stiff, she thought she should rather like, at least so she said in her first letter to Winifred.

Beatrice remained in London, and seemed to enjoy herself very much, being a good deal admired, and unusually popular. So May and June passed by. The small party at Pentyre certainly never regretted the larger parties in London, and were far from sharing the dulness or weariness they frequently entail.

It was with great regret that Lord Hazelby left Pentyre early in July. He had some promised visits to pay before joining his parents in Italy, and had put them off as long as possible, on the plea of reading, which, indeed, was a very honest excuse, for he did read with exemplary perseverance, though it was somewhat tried, sometimes by Lord Fortrose, who was particularly fond of organizing expeditions or proposing long rides, which must interfere with the hours Hazelby had appropriated to study. But Lady Fortrose generally contrived to arrange some satisfactory compromise, although once or twice, when this appeared impossible, Hazelby's heroism in declining to be of the party gave her great comfort, as it was an evidence of his earnestness of purpose, which she had sometimes fancied wanting.

Minna, too, certainly deserved some credit for the

self-denial with which she looked approval of a decision which undoubtedly spoiled her pleasure for the time, and Hazelby ought to have been very grateful for her ready acquiescence.

"Well, I am off to-morrow," said he one evening, "and when I come back, Honoria, there's all that affair about my coming of age to take place."

"Yes, at Athenry, of course; they will expect great festivities."

"I wish it could have been at any other time of year, though," said Hazelby; "my father not being there will be a terrible disappointment."

"Yes, I am afraid so; but he seems anxious that it should really be kept on your birthday."

"Yes, that is the thing; but it is very vexing. You must all come and help me, however, and Fortrose must make speeches for my father; Beatrice will be delighted to do the honours, and she can win popularity for me, to be turned to account when I stand for the county."

"But I thought you were going into the army?"

"Yes; but can't I do both? I may be in the army long before I have either inclination or opportunity to be in Parliament, though that is the career my father designs me for. In the mean time you will all be kind enough to hold yourselves engaged to me at Athenry the last week in September."

The next day Hazelby left Pentyre, and Minna was once more alone with her aunt, for Lord Fortrose accompanied Hazelby part of the way to London, in order to visit a friend in one of the midland counties.

And now Minna and Winifred betook themselves again to the summer life of long ago. They ram-

bled about the woods and cliffs, and revisited many of the old haunts they had learned to love together. What with Beatrice to amuse, and the pleasures of boating and riding, those long exploring walks had been almost given up of late years, and Minna's thoughts went back to the time when Winifred was her only companion, and when she knew and believed in scarcely any happiness equal to that of her summer life at Pentyre. Not that her life had been less happy since those very early days of unclouded brightness, but it was a different happiness, for she had seen clouds now; but who shall say that the sunbursts between were not all the brighter in consequence? And responsibility had come to her also, and with it the desire of doing anything, however slight, to assist or comfort her fellow-creatures, and of using faithfully and conscientiously the talents and advantages with which God had blessed her. The conviction also that such a life of sunshine could not always be hers; the certainty that for her, as for almost all Christians, some sterner training was needed, and would be sent—how or when she knew not—threw a deeper shade of earnestness over her happiness, and made the Minna of to-day enjoy life very differently from the Minna of five years ago. But the difference was an advantage in itself, and Minna spoke truth when she said to Winifred, that everything appeared to her "more lovely and delightful than it did formerly." This remark occurred in the course of a long walk just before they descended with some difficulty a little rugged and half-concealed pathway cut in the side of the cliff, and leading to a cave which ran back some way into the ground, and was very dark inside, while the sea lay in bright light

many feet below the entrance. Here the two cousins used often to sit in old days amusing themselves with the idea that nobody would find them if they were missed, and here they now sat down to have, as Winifred said, a nice long talk.

"Do you know, Minna—I hope it is not wrong to say it—but I am glad Beatrice went to London this year; it is so long since I have had you to myself, and indeed since she came to live with us we have quite left off our old walks and talks together."

"Yes; but the change could not be helped, as Beatrice is so much nearer my age."

"No, I know it came naturally; but that could not make it pleasant always; and Beatrice is not your sister."

"Oh! then you would not mind sparing me if she were?"

"I don't mean that at all, Minna. I mean that I am your sister, as mamma always considers, so I have more right to you than anybody else. Now, have I not?"

"Certainly, more than Beatrice; and I am not sorry we are to spend this summer without her, as I know she likes being in London; but I don't feel the same about Anne; I am so interested about her."

"Yes, so am I; at least I should like her very much if she were different."

"What! if she were somebody else? What an Irish speech," said Minna, laughing.

"No, not that; only, if she were different in some things, I should be very fond of her; but just when I think I am, she is either cross, or changeable, or selfish; for she is very selfish, Minna, and then I feel as if I could not bear her."

"Oh, Winifred! remember how much she is to be pitied; it must be so terrible to be lame."

"I do remember; but that is the very thing she is selfish about."

"How?" asked Minna.

"Why, in this sort of thing. You know how kind Miss Forbes was to her. Well, one day Anne was very melancholy because she had finished her work all but a few rows, and had no more wool left. Miss Forbes told her she had some of the same colour which she could give her by-and-bye. This was in the morning, when we were all at lessons, and about every ten minutes afterwards, Anne said, in a mournful voice—'Do you think I shall be able to finish my work, Miss Forbes?' Then, when Stuart was reading, and very inattentive, she twice came and asked about the work again, making him much more tiresome by the interruption. I begged her not to go a second time, as she might have gone on with her drawing instead; but she said, 'I must finish my work.' I thought Miss Forbes had got a headache, and when Stuart was gone, I asked her, and she said she had. Well, would you believe it? Anne actually began again to look at her work and sigh, and say, 'I wish I could finish it;' so Miss Forbes got up and said she would fetch the wool. I begged her not to go, as Anne could perfectly well wait; but Anne only said, 'Had you better go? Will it make your head ache?' And actually let Miss Forbes get all the way upstairs for a little bit of wool that did not signify if she had not had it for a week. Now, I call that selfish, and I told her so."

"What did she say?"

"Oh, she said she was not selfish; and if she was, I had no right to scold her. So I said I was not attempting to scold her; but I could not bear to see her take advantage of Miss Forbes' good nature. She was just beginning to cry when Miss Forbes came back, upon which Anne said, 'Winifred says I am selfish; do you think I am, Miss Forbes?' and, of course, Miss Forbes looked rather vexed, and said she hoped not, and afterwards Anne was just as bad as ever."

"But why did you not go and fetch the wool?"

"I did offer, but Miss Forbes said she did not think I could find it."

"It was thoughtless of Anne, certainly."

"Thoughtless! If I had done it, Minna, you would have called it selfish."

"Very likely; but I suppose you would not have done it; for it would have been much worse in you, because you have been so well taught, and so often reminded about these sort of things, and Anne has not. And, besides, when people have been ill, and used to being waited on, they are very apt to grow selfish without knowing it, and merely from want of thought, and this I believe is Anne's case; but it is a great pity. I scarcely know anything that makes people so unloveable, and yet she, of all people, is most anxious to be loved."

"Yes; and she is rather selfish about that. With Hazelby, for instance, whom I think she likes better than anybody else. I have often seen her keep him, and beg and entreat him to drive with her and her mother, without ever thinking that he would much rather go with you and Beatrice. Lady Elizabeth used to remind her of that sometimes, but in such a dis-

Minna and Winifred.—P. 131.

agreeable way, that it always made Hazelby take Anne's part, and go with her; so it did no good."

"Well, but now, Winifred, we will not discuss our neighbours' faults any more; the moral of all this being that we are to consult their inclinations, and not our own; and I cannot suppose they have any desire to be criticised by us, though, fortunately, it may do them no harm. But as you have mentioned some of Anne's imperfections, I must tell you what I particularly admire in her; and that is, her clear-sightedness as to duty. I think she has a remarkably strong sense of what she owes to her parents, and of the necessity of making them and their wishes the first consideration; I don't mean only in the way of direct obedience, but in the careful recollection of their wishes, even when they cross her own; for instance, when she first came here, she could not bear the idea of being under Miss Forbes, because she fancied Miss Forbes would dislike having her; but she never made any objection, and I only found it out by a casual remark, and then it appeared that her desire to please her father by her progress, was her only motive for getting over the odd shyness which was real suffering to her, and she said she did not think she ought to be enjoying herself here, unless she was doing something to please her father at the same time, as it was so very kind of him to spare her at all."

They now proceeded on their walk, stopping here and there to gather wild flowers, which grew in abundance in the sheltered places up and down the cliff.

Leaving the wilder tracks, they came presently on a small grass-bordered path leading to a stile.

Winifred *got over first*, and just as Minna joined her

she exclaimed, "Don't move, Minna! look down at that ivy." Minna looked and saw a tall blade of grass bending under the weight of a piece of ivy which had twined round it.

Winifred tried to lift the ivy away, but it clung firmly to the grass, making a little bright green bush about a foot high. It was really very curious, for the one blade of grass looked so much weaker than the ivy that depended on it for support, and after admiring it, the cousins as they passed on drew the very natural parallel between the bending stalk of grass and an ill-chosen friend.

This led to a discussion on the choice of friends in general, which lasted during the remainder of the walk, and in which it was pretty evident that each considered the other a very good example of friendship.

CHAPTER XIV.

FLITTING.

Oh, bitter to the youthful heart
That scarce a pang, a care has known,
The hour when first from scenes we part,
Where life's bright spring has flown!
Forsaking, o'er the world to roam,
That little shrine of peace—our home!
Cold were the breast that would not heave
One sigh the home of youth to leave;
Stern were the heart that would not swell
To breathe life's saddest word—farewell!

MRS. HEMANS.

AUGUST brought Beatrice back to Pentyre; she had paid several country visits with Lady Elizabeth after the London season, and had made many new friends and acquaintances, but was as much pleased to return to Pentyre as she had formerly been.

Minna was doubtful whether her aunt wished to take her to Athenry. Her own feelings were against going, and she thought that her father and sisters would prefer her remaining in retirement till the winter.

One or two letters from home had also given her a feeling of dissatisfaction for which she could scarcely account. Rhoda seemed less cheerful, and Bessie less contented, at least so Minna thought, and then accused herself of indulging unkind fancies about her sisters. Then she was seized with a longing desire to know how

they really were getting on, better than letters could tell her, and while pondering one day on all that concerned them, a long letter from Margaret was put into her hands. It was the second Margaret had written to her since her mother's death, and abounded, like the other, in expressions of almost more than sisterly affection. There were one or two sentences about home that particularly touched Minna in her present mood.

Margaret was so rejoiced at the intimate friendship that subsisted between her sisters, notwithstanding their separation. Then followed a happy account of her three children, and she expressed her thankfulness that they had not yet attained the age when she must send them from her, for their health's sake, and then, *apropos* of health, came the anxiety about Bessie, and Minna read, and thought, and decided.

She would ask Lady Fortrose to let her go to King's Holm instead of to Athenry.

The request was acceded to without difficulty, Lady Fortrose only saying she should be sorry not to have Minna, but quite coinciding in the opinion that Mr. Raymond would be better pleased that she should not be of the party.

Beatrice was very sorry to find they were not to enjoy the Athenry *fêtes* together, as she said there would be several friends of hers there, whom she wished to introduce to Minna, Lord Ralegh among the number, who was described by Beatrice as the most fascinating person she had ever met.

About the middle of September the whole party left Pentyre. They slept one night in London, and the next day Minna went to King's Holm.

She found Rhoda and Bessie eagerly expecting her,

and her father very cheerful and pleased at her coming. Nothing was said about her not going to Athenry, but it seemed to be so perfectly understood as a matter of course, that Minna could not but feel they would have thought it odd if she had gone, and was in consequence very thankful that she had decided against it.

Bessie looked better, and Minna was therefore much surprised when her father told her he had determined to seek a warmer climate on account of the health of his youngest daughter. He had not been able to decide upon this earlier, as Frank's plans were uncertain, and he wished to be near him, but now Frank had been presented to the living of Sandsclyst, in Devonshire, and it was to that neighbourhood Mr. Raymond intended to remove.

"Have you found anything that will suit you there, or do you mean to live with Frank?" asked Minna.

"That we cannot do even if I wished it, for Frank has no house, and lodges with a farmer. The last incumbent let the rectory, and Frank has kept on with the same tenants. But there is another village not far off, called Guysbrooke, and there Frank has found a house that he thinks will suit us. It is a mild climate, and a nice cheerful place, he says, so you see that will be just the thing for Bessie."

"And when do you go?" asked Minna.

"I gave notice to leave this house at Michaelmas, but our landlord is very considerate, and will have nothing to say against our staying on a few days, till the other place is ready."

"Michaelmas! so soon as that? Why, it is the nineteenth to-day, father."

"Yes, it is rather tiresome to do things in such a

hurry, and I am afraid your sisters feel it so, but I will tell you how it happens. You see I was very anxious to get Bessie away before the winter, for she is beginning to cough again, so I told Frank to look out as quick as he could. Well, he only went in the middle of August, and not knowing the neighbourhood, it was some time before he heard of this place at Guysbrooke, and then when he found it I was obliged to give notice at once, or I must have stayed here till Christmas, which is what I wished to avoid; so you are just come in time to see the last of the old place, and I am more than ever glad to have you now, for you will cheer your sisters, and me, too. We are all rather low about going, I think." And Mr. Raymond made a vain attempt to end his sentence in a cheerful tone, for in truth it was a severe trial to leave King's Holm, where all his married life had been passed, and where the churchyard contained what was so dear to him. But he had made up his mind that a warmer climate was necessary for Bessie, and he had also a great desire to be near his younger son, since the eldest was so far away. Minna thought the change in Rhoda's spirits was now accounted for, and gave her hearty sympathy to the regret her sister expressed.

"I can't tell you, Minna, what a desolate prospect it is; everybody I know or care for lives about here, and the place itself seems like a friend. I shall never like any other so well."

"No, I am afraid you will not, at least not for a long time; but Guysbrooke is a pretty place, is it not?"

"Well, Frank said in his letter to me, that, for a Devonshire village, it is not considered pretty; and

certainly it does not sound like those one reads about. He says the country round it is rather level."

"How far off does he live?"

"Five miles; and so papa fancies we shall see him every day, but I know that is a delusion. A clergyman, with plenty to do, can't ride five miles out of his parish every day without neglecting his duty, and Frank has been too long with Mr. Thorburn to do that. Why, even when he was there, at half the distance, he never came to us more than twice a week."

"Still it will be a comfort to have him within reach; you would be much more lonely and desolate if he were not there. And are there any neighbours, or is it quite a small village?"

"He said nothing about neighbours, except that there is a great house a mile and a half from the village; it is called Guysbrooke Park, and is not inhabited, so that is not cheerful," said Rhoda, rather bitterly.

"It does not sound so, certainly; but yet I cannot help hoping it will be better when you are there."

"It may easily be better than it sounds, indeed."

"But there must at least be a clergyman; did not Frank mention him?"

"Oh yes, that is the only redeeming point. The clergyman is a Mr. Percival, whose wife, Frank says, seems a nice person."

"Well, that is something; have they any children, I wonder?"

"He did not say; but it would not make much difference."

"Oh, yes; at least to Bessie, who is so fond of children, and they are always an interest."

"Yes, but I daresay our house will be a long way from the rectory, for it stands by itself. There is another house opposite, but Frank did not say who lives there; nobody I should think. And now I remember, he said the rectory is at one end of the village, and Guysbrooke Park at the other."

"Then it is to be hoped you will be at the rectory end. How does Bessie like the prospect of the change?"

"Why she is vexed because it is on her account; but it is just as much on Frank's, as I tell her.'

"But does she dislike leaving King's Holm as much as you do?"

"No, I don't think she does," said Rhoda.

Bessie confirmed this opinion when Minna talked to her about the "flitting," and further, confided her private conviction that Rhoda would not care so much about leaving King's Holm if Naylehurst were not so near it.

"Why Naylehurst?" said Minna; and then with a sudden dawn of intelligence—"Oh! Mr. Thorburn."

"Yes," said Bessie, "he has been very kind, and very often comes here to see papa; and I know Rhoda likes him very much, and so do I; and I never thought she cared particularly, but, since it has been settled about our going, I observe she never talks of him, and never seems to want to see him."

"But that is an odd way of liking him."

"Yes, but then I know she does not dislike him; so why does she change at all? I don't," said Bessie, innocently.

"She is certainly not disposed to like Guysbrooke," said Minna.

"No; and I am so sorry."

"Do you think Mr. Thorburn likes Rhoda?"

"I really don't know. He has such a grave manner that I never can tell what he is thinking of; but you will see him. He is sure to come to-day or to-morrow, so then you can judge."

And Minna had an opportunity of judging that very afternoon, and came to no satisfactory conclusion, for she had no experience in such matters, and Mr. Thorburn's grave manner puzzled her, as it did Bessie.

"Some letters and a newspaper for you, Minna," said Bessie, one morning, as her sister entered the room.

"A newspaper! Oh I daresay it contains an account of the *fêtes* at Athenry. Do open it, Bessie, while I read my letters; one is from Beatrice, I see."

Bessie was in the middle of a glowing description of the rejoicings in honour of Lord Hazelby's coming of age, when Minna interrupted her.

"Here is some pleasant news. Beatrice is going to be married to Lord Ralegh."

"Oh, is she? Do you know Lord Ralegh?"

"No; but I have often heard of him both from Hazelby and from her."

"Then he is a nice person, I suppose?" said Bessie.

"Why, because Minna does not know him?" said Rhoda.

"No, but if he is a friend of Lord Hazelby."

"I daresay Lord Hazelby would appreciate the compliment," said Minna, smiling; "but I would not promise to like all his friends."

"Well, but Minna, nice people generally have nice friends; now Harry's friends, I always believe I should like them."

"I daresay I should respect them," said Minna, "for the qualities he likes in them."

"But that is very different to liking them; and Minna is right, one can never be sure of liking a brother's friend. Men are so much less particular than women."

"Well then, Rhoda," pursued Bessie, "what do you think of Mr. Thorburn, as a brother's friend?"

"We knew him as soon as Frank did, so that is not a good instance. What a good speech Lord Hazelby made, Minna," continued Rhoda, who had taken up the newspaper.

"Did he? Yes, I must read it. My aunt says everything went off admirably."

"What a pity you could not be there," said Rhoda, again.

"I don't know that I should have enjoyed it much; certainly not now," said Minna, "for I should have been so sorry not to come here."

"Ah, it would have been sad for you not to see King's Holm again," said Bessie; "next time you come to see us we shall be at Guysbrooke, I suppose."

"I am rather curious to see Guysbrooke, I confess," said Minna.

"That is a good thing, because then you will come soon."

"Not if you send me discouraging accounts of it; but I have long had a great wish to see Devonshire."

"Well, I only hope we shall not all be terribly disappointed," said Rhoda, mournfully; "and now, Minna, I want to ask you about these books. Here are some that belong to you and Winifred; shall we take them to Guysbrooke, or will you take them away?"

"It depends whether you have done with them."

"Oh, yes; for they are chiefly children's books, which you lent us long ago."

"But I don't think they are worth taking back. Geraldine and Wentworth have more books than they know what to do with, and you can lend these again. I daresay in the western wilds children will be found to enjoy them; Mrs. Percival's, for instance."

"Oh," said Bessie, eagerly, "do you know them, Minna?"

"Who?" said Rhoda.

"Mrs. Percival and her children."

Rhoda and Minna laughed, and Rhoda explained.

"Mrs. Percival is entirely indebted to Minna's imagination for her children. I believe she has none."

"I wish she had," said Bessie; "what a dreadfully dull place Guysbrooke will be!"

"Now really, Bessie, that is absurd. Because Minna falsely raised your expectations about Mrs. Percival's children, you find out all on a sudden that the place is dull. Why don't you write and ask Frank about the children of the neighbourhood?"

"I will," said Bessie; "I meant to write to him to-day, and I will begin with that question."

"Then do write at once, for I must write my congratulations to Beatrice now, and when I have done we can take a walk."

"Oh, not before luncheon, Minna," said Rhoda. "I have so much to do."

"Very well, then; I will go and take that sketch of the church, as I promised you, and Bessie shall come to talk to me the while; so now to business."

And Minna left the room to write her letters and to read over again those she had received.

Perhaps she was the less disposed to think it a pity she had not been at Athenry, because she had such comforting assurances that she was not forgotten there; Beatrice wrote that she missed her terribly, and added, "Hazelby's disappointment amounted to consternation, and he was with difficulty persuaded to be civil to Honoria, when he found she had consented to your defection." "So like Beatrice," soliloquized Minna; but she was pleased, too; it was so pleasant to be remembered when out of sight. Beatrice further proceeded to ask Minna to be her bridesmaid, though, of course, the time of her marriage was not yet fixed; so Minna wrote a warm congratulation, and accepted the office, which she was to share with Winifred and Geraldine and a few more "particular friends," of whom Beatrice boasted a large number.

Minna's letter to Lady Fortrose was much longer, as she had to give an account of the intended migration to Guysbrooke, and to ask for directions about rejoining her aunt. This, however, was at last concluded, and she set out with Bessie to make the promised sketch, in which pleasant occupation the rest of the morning passed away.

The afternoon walk was a very pleasant one. Many reminiscences were called up by the well-known scenes which the sisters were so soon to abandon, and many little facts of family annals which Minna had never heard before, were now related, and filled her with interest. Margaret became the subject of conversation; how sorry she would be to return and find the old *place forsaken.*

"But do you think there is any chance of her returning?" said Minna.

"Not just yet," said Rhoda; "but you know the children must come before long, and she always said she should hope to bring them herself. That is one good thing about this house at Guysbrooke; it is larger than we shall require, and Frank advises my father to leave some of the rooms unfurnished, which he has consented to do, but you see it will be a comfort to have those rooms if Margaret and the children come."

"Yes; but we need not have moved yet on that account," said Bessie, "as it will be two or three years before they are old enough, and many things may happen in that time. But I hope Margaret will come with them; I quite long to see her; I don't feel as if I knew her well. I was so young when she went; I remember her wedding-day, though; do you, Minna?"

"Yes, very well. And that reminds me to tell you I am to be bridesmaid to Beatrice."

"Oh, when is her marriage to take place?"

"I do not know yet, but I should think not till the spring, when Lord and Lady St. Melion can come to England."

"Is Lord St. Melion obliged to stay away so much?"

"Yes; the doctors say a winter in England would kill him."

"Poor Beatrice," said Bessie; "it must be very uncomfortable for her to have no settled home."

"I do not think she is much to be pitied," said Minna, "while she has a home at Pentyre; she could not have a lovelier or a happier home."

"No; I forgot that. But is she as fond of it as you are?"

"Probably not," said Minna, with brightening cheeks, and a smile.

"Why not?" said Bessie.

"Because nobody is, I believe, unless it be Winifred."

"Ah! you mean that she does like it, only not in that way; and then it is different, not having been brought up there as a child."

"Yes; but I don't think that makes much difference always, but there is a charm in woods and mountain scenery, and a binding fascination in the ever-changing yet never changing sea that acts like a spell on me."

"And you look so when you talk of it," said Bessie, smiling.

"Why, what do you mean? How do I look?" asked Minna.

"All bright and excited. I shall always talk about Pentyre when I want you to look pretty, Minna."

"Thank you," said Minna, laughing.

"It is a good thing to study the becoming for other people," said Rhoda, joining in the laugh.

"Well then, Rhoda, I will look out for your spell," said Minna.

"I have none," was the reply; "and if I had, the effect would not be fortunate, perhaps." And Rhoda turned the conversation into a more practical channel, by calling her sister's attention to the fact, that the box of commissions which Margaret had written for was to be sent off next week, and therefore any contributions must be ready by that time, and Minna's experience of Stuart's taste was appealed to, to assist in the choice of presents for a nephew and niece under four years of age.

CHAPTER XV.

NEW SCENES AND NEW PEOPLE.

I love to visit foreign climes,
To stand on classic ground,
Where the spirit of the glorious past
Seems brooding all around;
To bend above the hallow'd shrine
Where great and good men rest:
But wheresoe'er I go, I love
The coming home the best!

MRS. COATES.

MINNA joined Lady Fortrose in London on the 1st of October, and the little house at King's Holm was vacated on the following day.

There were various plans in agitation to which Beatrice's engagement had given rise. As Minna had expected the marriage was to be deferred till the spring, and Lady St. Melion wished Beatrice to join her immediately at Paris, and wanted Hazelby to escort his sister thither. This, however, was out of the question, as he had to be at Oxford on the day that Lady St. Melion proposed meeting them at Paris. What was to be done?

Lord Fortrose solved the difficulty, by offering to take Beatrice himself; and then came the very natural suggestion that Minna should go too. She was delighted at the idea; she had never been abroad, and any expedition with her uncle must be delightful.

So it was speedily settled, and after a week spent in London, where Minna was far too busy to be aware of its dulness, the trio set off for Paris.

Minna's happiness was unbounded. New scenes had for her more than the ordinary charm; her taste for beauty in all its forms, and her eye for colour, added life to her enjoyment, and the pleasant companions of her journey did not prevent her looking forward eagerly to a meeting with Anne at the end of it.

But in this she was disappointed; for Lady St. Melion, who had travelled from Nice to meet Beatrice, left Anne with her father. She gave a very good account of her, however, and said that Miss Groves had been of great use to her, and that she and Anne were excellent friends.

Lady St. Melion and Beatrice quitted Paris on the following day, and Lord Fortrose devoted himself during the next fortnight to the task of showing Minna all that could be seen.

Paris now began to fill with visitors, many of whom as usual were English, and among them Minna met an old acquaintance, Mr. Edward Greville, who had missed her, he said, at the Athenry *fêtes*. He was somewhat older than Hazelby, and had already left Oxford. He was now amusing himself at Paris, and spent a great deal of his time with the family of a General Bampfylde, to one of whose daughters London and Paris had already agreed to marry him. Lord Fortrose had some slight acquaintance with General Bampfylde, and as the young ladies frequently met, Minna was soon on pretty friendly terms with them.

The youngest, Cecilia, was fair and rather pretty.

Augusta, the elder, and the one pointed out for Mr. Greville, was tall, dark, and called very handsome, but her chief claims to the appellation consisted in dark eyes, darker eyebrows, and fine hair, which was also nearly black. She was the sort of person whom you would not think of calling handsome till somebody else said so, and then you became aware of the fact, and agreed with them.

Minna found her a pleasant companion, but was at times rather disposed to dislike her for a certain superciliousness of manner, which, however, was only observable occasionally, and was never assumed towards Minna herself; but Miss Bampfylde had a great idea of what was consistent with the dignity of herself and family, and accordingly was sometimes shunned for her apparent haughtiness. Cecilia was the most popular, therefore, though not the most admired of the sisters; and Minna, to whom Lord Fortrose had mentioned the report about Mr. Greville, wondered a little at his choice, and then proceeded to doubt it entirely, as she saw more of the young lady.

After three happy weeks spent in Paris, Lord Fortrose and Minna turned their faces homewards; but Lord Fortrose, who had agreeable recollections of a tour in Normandy in his younger days, determined to extend their travels a little by revisiting Rouen, with which venerable city, so rich in historical associations, Minna was much pleased and interested. She was very sorry when the three days her uncle had decided to spend there were come to an end, and left Rouen with more regret than she had felt in leaving Paris, greatly cheered, however, by her uncle's proposal of returning next autumn with Lady Fortrose and

Winifred, who would be sure to appreciate most highly all the attractions of the once royal city.

November had begun, with its fogs in London and yellow drifting leaves in the country, when Lord Fortrose and Minna arrived at Pentyre. The trip had been most prosperous, and Lady Fortrose quite agreed that the prospect of an autumn in Normandy sounded very agreeable.

Minna's sketches were duly admired and commented on; but they were chiefly figures, picturesque models for which abound in the north-west of France, where the distinctive costume is still worn. Minna excelled in figures, but sketching in general was not one of her most successful accomplishments. The autumn chills seemed to promise a severe winter, and Minna congratulated her father on having removed Bessie to a warmer climate in time. But at Pentyre the cold weather was no impediment to the usual out-of-doors amusements, and Minna and Winifred enjoyed their long rides as much as ever.

Winifred began to long for next year, that she might visit some of the scenes which Minna described so graphically.

"I often longed to have you there," said Minna; "it will be doubly pleasant next time, when we can go over everything together. That delightful hotel at Rouen! there is such a view from the front windows—the river and bridge, and St. Catherine's Mount at a distance; and from my bedroom I could see that wonderful tower of the beautiful Church of St. Ouen, looking like lacework all the way up."

"It is very odd, Minna, you have told me more of *what* you saw in those four weeks, than Beatrice ever *did, though* she has been so much abroad."

"Have I? Ah, because it is all new to me, and Beatrice is so used to it, she forgets it can be new to anybody."

"Perhaps that is it; but I am sure that most people are very little more interesting from having travelled; they either tell you nothing at all, or else they tell you just what you do not want to hear, and only talk of things abroad to disparage things at home."

"Why, Winifred, you are very severe. What unfortunate traveller has been offending you?"

"Offending me!" repeated Winifred, colouring. "Oh, nobody has offended me; only I did think it rather provoking the other day, when Lady Maria Blake came with Lady Ralegh to see Pentyre, and when she was looking at the view, she turned to me, and said, 'It is very pretty, but you should see the blue of the Mediterranean.' So silly of her; as if I ever supposed this sea was as blue as that. I liked Lady Ralegh's hearty admiration so much better."

"I hope Lady Maria will not say 'but' about Beatrice," said Minna.

"Oh no, they are quite delighted at the marriage, and think nothing good enough to say for her and Hazelby. Lord Ralegh is a great friend of his, you know."

"Yes," said Minna. "How old is Lady Maria?"

"I don't know; about nineteen or twenty, I should think."

"Is she the only sister-in-law Beatrice will have?"

"No, there are two or three younger. Lord Ralegh is the eldest of the family. What a pity it was you did not see Anne at Paris, Minna."

"Yes, I was very sorry she did not come. You *know my uncle had* nearly made up his mind to go on

with Lady St. Melion and Beatrice to Nice, and then I should have seen her. I think he will very likely take us all to Italy next year."

"How delightful that will be," said Winifred; "it is much pleasanter to go altogether, is it not, Minna?"

"Yes, I should enjoy it very much more; but I did find this trip with my uncle so delightful—you cannot think how kind he was. I should not have wished, however, to go on to Italy, for I much prefer spending Christmas at home."

"But what a small party we shall be without Beatrice and Anne. I wish they were coming; I like a large, merry party at Christmas."

Winifred's wish was gratified; for Beatrice and Anne, with their brother, joined the party at Pentyre just before Christmas, their plans for the winter having been changed by the state of Lord St. Melion's health, which made the doctors urgent that he should again spend the winter in Madeira. With much difficulty Lady St. Melion prevailed on him to follow this advice. He could not bear to part with Beatrice again so soon, but neither would he hear of her accompanying him. He even wished Lady St. Melion to remain with her daughters, but to this she would not consent, so she wrote to confide them to the sisterly care of Honoria, and Hazelby went from Oxford to Italy to see his father, and to bring his sisters home. He found Lord St. Melion still doubtful as to the necessity of going to Madeira, but Hazelby added his entreaties to those of his mother, and all objections were overruled.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOO BRIGHT TO LAST.

Oh ye hours! ye sunny hours!
In your silent flow
Ye are mighty, mighty powers,
Bring ye bliss or woe?

Ask not this! oh seek not this!
Yield your hearts awhile
To the soft wind's balmy kiss,
And the heaven's bright smile.

Throw not shades of anxious thought
O'er the glowing flowers,
We are come with sunshine fraught,
Question not the hours.

MRS. HEMANS.

A WARM welcome awaited the travellers at Pentyre. It seemed so natural to be all together again at this happy home, and both Beatrice and Anne were glad to spend another Christmas with their sister. The improvement in their father's health also relieved them from the anxiety which had for some time weighed on their spirits, and the doctors at Nice had assured them that a winter in Madeira would probably have an excellent effect in confirming this improvement. So this happy season was hailed at Pentyre by happy hearts. Anne was much improved. Miss Groves had accompanied the party to England,

and was now gone to spend Christmas with her own family, but had certainly left tokens of her influence in the cheerful and contented tone of mind now observable in her pupil. She had become less exacting, and, consequently, appeared much more amiable, and there was more real friendship between her and Beatrice since Anne had learned to be less severe on others, and more watchful over herself.

Happiness, also, had a good effect on Beatrice, and Minna thought she had never liked her so well before. She was very anxious to be better acquainted with her sisters-in-law, and Lady Fortrose invited Lord Ralegh and his eldest sister, who accordingly joined the party in time for New Year's Day. Hazelby begged permission to ask his friend Edward Greville, and Lady Fortrose willingly consented.

"Is not Mr. Greville going to be married?" said Minna.

"Not that I know of," said Hazelby. "Have you any reason for saying so?"

"No; only people said at Paris that he was going to marry Miss Bampfylde, but I cannot say I thought it likely."

"You do not like Miss Bampfylde," said Hazelby, with a smile.

"I do not dislike her," said Minna.

"No; but if you had liked her, you would not have been surprised that Greville should like her too."

"Liking and marrying are very different," said Minna. "Do you know Miss Bampfylde?"

"Yes, and I do not like her," said Hazelby; "there's an example of candour for you."

"Who? you or Miss Bampfylde?"

"Can you doubt? Is Miss Bampfylde very candid?"

"Yes, if saying you do not like people shows candour; for she hardly seems to like anybody. I could not help telling her I thought her a most unfortunate person in that respect."

"Now, do you know, I think it shows her to be a discriminating person; she is not blind to the general inferiority of mankind."

"But is it not a great pity to think people inferior?"

"If they are so, can you blame her for seeing it!"

"But if she shows the feeling, I must suppose she considers herself superior!"

"Certainly. Do you not agree with her!"

"I do not think that sort of fastidiousness is a mark of superiority. It seems to me, that a really superior person would seek and find something worth liking in almost everybody; and the more difficult the discovery, the more superiority would be proved in making it."

"Then, after all, it would be almost immaterial to your 'superior person' whether his lot were cast among clever or stupid, among interesting or among humdrum people."

"No, not immaterial, as sympathy and interest would be all ready for him in the one case, and in the other he would have to labour patiently, and perhaps almost hopelessly, for them; but still he ought to seek them, not shut himself up in reserve because he is not among the companions he would have chosen."

"Yet you know some people suit you as companions and friends, and some do not. Now, suppose you had to live among people who did not suit you, you certainly would not be as happy as you are."

"But we cannot expect through a whole life to meet

only with people who suit us, or, as the phrase more truly means, people who, as we fancy, appreciate us, and I sometimes think there is something very faulty in the weight we give to the expression when we talk of people not suiting us."

"I think you are right, Minna," said Lady Fortrose, whose attention had been attracted to the conversation as it became more serious, "and it seems to me that this expression often implies an uncharitable and perhaps unchristian degree of fastidiousness, for when we say a person does not suit us, we do not mean that there is any real fault in his character which stands in the way of our friendship, but only that there is a general want of sympathy with our tastes or dispositions which renders him uninteresting to us. Yet how foolish it is to avoid or neglect acquaintance on this account; perhaps by going further we might find occasion to bestow the sympathy we have often been glad to receive."

"No doubt that is most true," said Hazelby; "but few people are sufficiently patient to persevere in such uphill work; and now, Minna, you must confess, after all, that you do prefer 'superior people.'"

"Not when their superiority gets in my way."

"What do you mean?"

"I dislike to be constantly reminded that a person is clever, or accomplished, or well-read; it is a difficult thing to describe, but there are some people who make me feel that they have been highly educated without a thought of their education ever crossing my mind, and there are others whose education seems to be brought before me intrusively in every word they utter. Those *are the* superior people whom I never do find agreeable."

"I know what you mean, and I quite agree, but I do not think Miss Bampfylde's is that sort of superiority."

"No; I was not thinking particularly of her. I could not quite make out her ground of exclusiveness; but she certainly does think very little of people in general, and takes very little pains to make herself pleasant to them, especially if they are what she calls 'nobody.'"

"That is an insinuation that she thinks herself 'somebody.'"

"I suppose she does," said Minna, laughing.

"I hope she recognised your existence also?"

"Oh yes, I have no cause of complaint. Only I do not think people should choose who they will be pleasant to, and who they will not. There, I have talked until I can't talk good grammar; but now I am sure you do not think Miss Bampfylde a likely person for Mr. Greville to marry?"

"I hope not," said Hazelby, "and I am glad you have so good an opinion of my friend's taste."

Minna soon had an opportunity of making an acquaintance who did not particularly suit her.

Lady Maria Blake appeared to be charmed with her future sister-in-law, and Beatrice liked her, though more perhaps for her brother's sake than for her own. Though alike in appearance, Lord Ralegh and his sister were very different in character, and Minna was glad that his was the one that inspired her with the most respect and confidence.

Lady Maria was small and dark, handsome and lively, and at times very amusing; but she was vain and capricious, and much too fond of admiration to be

always successful in securing it where she most wished to please.

So many young people together constituted a gay and happy party, and the new year was ushered in amidst smiles and bright hopes, which seemed to promise a fulfilment of the kind wishes so generally expressed on each New Year's Day, and so often, alas! disappointed.

Lady Fortrose wished to make this New Year's Day one of particular pleasure. It was the last that Beatrice would have to spend as one of her sister's family, and was valued accordingly.

Lady Fortrose therefore resolved to introduce the pretty and very pleasant custom so prevalent abroad, where the *etrennes* form so much more important a feature in the festivities of the season than the ordinary New Year's gifts do with us.

The great dining-room was therefore inexorably closed against intruders till twelve o'clock on the morning of the eventful day. Then the doors were thrown open, and all the party were invited to enter.

The long tables were covered with white table-cloths, on which were laid wreaths of ivy and other evergreens, interspersed with bright holly-berries; the wreaths serving to divide the spaces on the tables. For there were little heaps and undulations, each with a napkin thrown over to hide its cause, and on the top of each was pinned a paper bearing a name printed in large letters.

Every child and every visitor found his or her name thus inscribed, and became at once the happy possessor of the concealed treasures underneath.

The table in the middle was set apart for Beatrice,

and her presents were the most numerous, as Lady Fortrose had made known her intentions, and the contributions were very general. But many of the others could bear no unworthy comparison with them, for all the New Year's gifts had been entrusted to Lady Fortrose's care.

Minna was delighted to find among hers a bracelet of Winifred and Geraldine's hair, which was what she had long wished to possess, and in the locket that clasped it was one of her darling Stuart's brown curls.

All the presents gave genuine satisfaction, but none more so than a concertina, which was Lord Fortrose's present to Minna, and which he said she deserved for the pains she had taken in teaching the school-children to sing; Minna looked at Hazelby as if she thought he ought to have his share of the credit, and he came forward and said to her quietly, "See what comes of taking good advice;" at the same time holding up for her admiration a little clock which his sister had given him, as a testimony of the unswerving punctuality with which he kept to his self-appointed hours of study. Minna could only reply with a smile, and joined the group that had collected round the centre table. Beatrice was all delight and gratitude, and a deeper feeling was mingled with her pleasure, as she thought of the warm and true affection of the friends she was so soon to leave.

The rest of the day passed as cheerfully as the morning, and all were in spirits for the dance that was to conclude it.

The previous day having been Sunday, there had been no temptation to dance the old year out, and Minna was glad to have escaped a custom which she

never liked. But this evening she was quite ready for any gaiety; she was in unusually high spirits.

It was true that she had thought much of the sad event that had called her from Pentyre this time last year, and the conversation with her mother had returned to her mind even on this day. Happy!—oh, yes; and happier now than ever; and in the midst of the brightness around her she felt that her mother would have rejoiced in her joy, and that happiness such as hers was almost a tribute to that dear mother's memory; so there was no misgiving to dim the enjoyment of life's blessings.

In the course of the evening Minna looked round several times for Anne, and saw her looking cheerful and happy, and seldom alone, for little Wentworth was very fond of her, and if no other companion had joined her, he was pretty sure to be at her side. Once when Minna looked, and had intended to refuse a dance, in order to sit with her, she was pleased to see Beatrice engaged in an animated conversation with her little sister, and Anne's face was lighted up with pleasure and amusement, so Minna accepted the partner who now offered himself, and who was no other than Stuart, delighted to be allowed to sit up late for once, though even now under sentence to go to bed after this dance, for which he had therefore thrown himself on Minna's charity, having moreover informed his mother that he could not go to bed till he had danced with Minna.

It was late, or rather early, when the party separated, and Minna only stayed a few minutes in Winifred's room to agree that it had been a wonderfully happy day, without one *contre-temps*, and to express her great satisfaction at the change which had taken

place in Anne's character, and which had never shown itself so strikingly as on this evening.

"Yes," said Winifred; "I think she is learning to be happy, and Beatrice is kinder to her than she used to be. I think being happy makes people kind."

"Then you and I ought to be very kind."

"Well, I am sure you are, Minna, and I try to be. Of course when God is so good, and everybody is so kind to me, I should be very ungrateful if I did not try."

"And you do, my darling; that is one reason why people are so good to you. You love them, so they can't help loving you."

"Do they? I am very glad," said Winifred; "but if they love me, how they must love you."

Minna laughed.

"Ah, you are not an impartial judge where I am concerned. Now, good night, my darling, and may God bless you, and give us both a happy year."

CHAPTER XVII.

FAIS CE QUE DOIS ADVIENNE QUE POURRA.

A moment's thinking is an hour in words;
An hour of words is little for some woes.
HOOD.

Two letters were lying by Minna's plate when she came down to breakfast on the following morning. One was from Rhoda. This Minna read first, being somewhat anxious for another account of Bessie, for Rhoda's letters had lately been few and far between, and Minna was not quite satisfied with Bessie's account of herself.

This letter, however, contained another subject of importance, as Beatrice surmised, while she watched the smile of pleased interest that grew on Minna's lips as she read. But when she quietly folded up and restored the letter to the envelope, with the smile still playing on her countenance, Beatrice felt rather envious and disappointed, more especially as, having had no letter that morning, she was the more at leisure to busy herself with her neighbours' affairs.

Yes, Minna laid that letter down, thinking she had fully possessed herself of its contents.

A piece of news certainly, and very pleasant news, for Rhoda wrote to tell of her own engagement to Mr. Thorburn; but there was more—there was hidden in

that letter a turning point of Minna's life, and she did not yet see it.

Seeing that the other letter was from Frank, she could guess what it was about, so she kept it to read after breakfast, and joined in the general conversation. When the party dispersed, Minna put her arm through that of Beatrice, and led her into their sitting-room, saying, as they crossed the hall, "I have something to tell you;" which tantalizing intimation raised her companion's curiosity not a little. Anne was already in the room, and as soon as the door was closed, Minna abruptly announced—"Rhoda is going to be married!"

"Really! So that is your news. I am so glad," said Beatrice; "but to whom?"

"To Mr. Thorburn," answered Minna; "and I am very glad. I always hoped it would be so."

"Did you?" said Anne, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes. Last time I was at King's Holm I fancied that Rhoda rather liked him, and something Bessie said confirmed me in the idea."

Beatrice now left the room, and Minna proceeded quietly to open Frank's letter.

"But Bessie cannot be glad, I should think," said Anne. "How she will miss Rhoda! I can feel it because of Beatrice." Then, as the association of ideas brought back another conversation, "Oh! Minna," she exclaimed; "do you remember what you said?" And Anne stopped suddenly.

"What!" said Minna, looking up from her letter, and trying to prevent the change which she felt stealing over her countenance.

"You said once that if Rhoda married you must go and live with Bessie. But you will not; you need

not," added Anne, in a tone of almost frightened entreaty. Then, as Minna remained silent, she continued—"You cannot, you know. Honoria would never let you go, so——"

"Yes, she would if I ought," said Minna, in a low breathless tone, "and so would you, Anne; don't say anything; I must tell her the news, and then—I must think." And she left the room, but who could describe the weight that had fallen on her heart since she entered it.

Anne remained alone, and bitterly did she reproach herself for what she had said.

The improbability of the sacrifice had emboldened her to remind Minna, but she had done so without any idea of recommending it, and was dismayed at the effect her words had produced, while the conviction pressed upon her that Minna would do what she thought right at whatever cost. These were the very words in which Hazelby had once expressed his opinion of Minna's sense of duty. She had given an impression which was to prove too true.

And what would not Anne have done to persuade herself that it was not right or necessary; but she tried in vain.

Surely it would be right to go and take care of a widowed father and an invalid sister, but oh, to be that sister; a half smile crossed Anne's sad face as she said to herself, "I wish she had not said I was to tell nobody."

Minna went straight to Lady Fortrose's room, and spared herself the effort of immediately beginning a conversation, by putting Rhoda's letter into her aunt's hand.

Lady Fortrose read and commented on it with her usual warm sympathy, and asked several questions about Mr. Thorburn, nor did she discover that Minna's thoughts were preoccupied, for she had determined to say nothing till she had had time to think deliberately and alone.

To be alone was, however, an unusual thing with Minna. Perhaps this may be justly called one of the trials incidental to the position of a grown-up daughter in a large family; many complain of it, but Minna had never been in the habit of letting her own pursuits interfere with good-nature and sympathy for others, so that she was constantly in request; and now the addition of visitors in the house made her rarely able to call her time her own.

After hearing the particulars of Rhoda's engagement, Lady Fortrose began to make some arrangements for the amusement of her guests, and asked Minna what they were all going to do.

"Beatrice and Lady Maria are going to ride with their two brothers and Winifred I believe," said Minna.

"And are you not going to ride?"

"No, dear aunt. Beatrice rides my horse; I want her to try it, and I had rather not ride to-day."

"You are tired with the dancing last night; you look quite pale, dear."

"Perhaps I am rather tired," said Minna, her cheeks glowing scarlet.

"Well, you can drive with me in the phaeton. Oh, no, though, I promised to take Anne."

"Yes, do take her. I do not wish for a drive. If I go out, a walk with Geraldine will do me more good, for I have a little headache, and you know driving is

apt to increase it, but I daresay it will be well by-and-bye; and now I must go and think about my letter to Rhoda;" and Minna left the room, truly glad to escape from her aunt's kind and attentive eyes. Before she allowed herself to think of the future, she wrote an answer to Rhoda's letter, and there was no word that could imply the existence of any other feeling than satisfaction at the intelligence it contained.

Having accomplished this task, Minna rose and walked to the window.

She looked out on all that loveliness she had so long prized, and said to herself, "Leave it!" The idea seemed impossible.

Suddenly she thought of Frank's letter, which she had only just begun to read when Anne had interrupted her. She took it out, and stood at the window reading it. Frank wrote in low spirits; he certainly expressed satisfaction and pleasure at Rhoda's engagement, and mentioned Mr. Thorburn in high terms of affection and praise, but then he reverted anxiously to Bessie's state of health, doubting whether the change to Devonshire had not been rashly resolved on, and implying that he considered her much less strong than she had been at King's Holm. "My father gets nervous about her," he added, "and makes himself ill, but Rhoda's engagement has given him much satisfaction, for he has not yet perceived the utter impossibility that he and Bessie can go on alone, and what is to be done I cannot conceive, especially as Thorburn is anxious to be married before Lent, as he has a friend who can take his duty then." Minna stood with the letter open in her hand, and her eyes fixed on it, long after she had done reading it.

What did Frank mean?—Did he mean anything in particular?—How strange that he should write so!—Did he mean that?—and if he did——!

Anybody who has ever been suddenly awakened to the perception of an intensely painful duty which has unexpectedly devolved on him, will in some degree estimate the bewildering task which Minna was now obliged to face.

Not only a duty to be performed, at whatever cost to herself, but a sacrifice in which the feelings of others, and those the nearest and dearest, were involved, which could scarcely fail to meet with disapprobation, and even perhaps opposition, from those to please whom she would have devoted her life, and to whom she would only have refused what she owed to God himself. But that was the touchstone. The duty that now presented itself, was it or not a duty to God? He had given her as a daughter to Mr. Raymond. He had commanded her to honour her father; hitherto she had fulfilled that command by striving to do her duty in the home her father had chosen for her; but now that his home was lonely, now the one pale invalid was all that would remain to him of the loving group that used to minister to his happiness, must not the child, on whom all that makes life lovely had so long been lavished, return to cheer with her presence, and to soothe with her cares, the heart whose sorrows had almost kept pace with her joys?

"Yes. There lay the path of duty," said Conscience; "nothing could be plainer;" and Minna hailed the verdict by bursting into an agony of tears.

Oh! it was impossible. She would, but she could not. It would break the whole spring of her life at

once. Could God desire such a sacrifice? Had He given her such a home only to ask her to leave it when she loved it best? Oh, no, no! it cannot be. And yet another burst of heartful tears seemed to prove her own disbelief of such arguments. Tired of thought, weary of the aching sorrow, Minna cried on, and tried to think no more, but in vain; the voice of a tender conscience is not easily silenced, but the flow of tears and of thought seemed to calm one another, and she became more reconciled to the fatal "You must," that something seemed incessantly repeating within her.

She looked round her room, that pretty room that she loved, and had taken such pleasure in adorning.

The Castle at Pentyre had four octagon towers, and in one of these Minna's room was situated, just over her aunt's sitting-room, which opened on the picture-gallery.

An octagon room, three sides of which were occupied by windows commanding a beautiful view of wood, mountain, and sea; furniture of white, lined and bordered with Minna's favourite blue, and a white paper with a trailing wreath of blue convolvulus; the book-shelves filled with an arbitrary selection of favourites, new and old; a small octagon table, on which were writing materials, and numerous little presents, both useful and ornamental, which friends had loved to contribute from time to time to Minna's pretty room. Such was Minna's retreat now, and the beauty and luxury around did not make it easier to think of leaving such a home. When the luncheon-bell rung, she had arrived at one decision, and that was, to say no*thing until* the party broke up in the following week.

and this would give her time to weigh the matter more deliberately.

The next thing was to ensure Anne's silence. Minna need not have troubled herself about this, as Anne was far too much concerned to think of mentioning the subject without permission. When Minna begged her not to refer to the conversation of the morning, she said, "Oh! then you have not decided?" But Minna only shook her head; her conscience had decided, but her heart could not yet bear to face that decision. Minna had inherited her father's promptness of judgment, which had so influenced her early fate, and if she wished to ponder and consider the subject yet again in all its bearings, it was rather to find out if there were any valid reasons why she should not leave her aunt's family; yet, while she sought them, she knew the search was vain, and there was a very unusual stillness on her countenance when she sat down to luncheon. Fortunately, Lady Fortrose's inquiries after her headache caused her silence and paleness to be attributed to that; but her self-command was severely tried when, the conversation having turned upon travelling, Winifred said, in answer to a question—

"No, I have never been abroad, but papa talks of taking us this year."

"Yes, if we can manage it," said Lord Fortrose, "and Minna will want to show you her favourite, Rouen. I began to think I should never get her away, till I promised to take her back again some day with you."

"How was it you did not go on to Italy, Miss Raymond?" said Lord Ralegh.

"It was a great mistake," said Hazelby; "but, however, it can easily be repaired; and it is pleasanter to

go with a whole party, and have plenty of time; but you really must keep him up to it this year," added he, to Minna. "I don't consider your education complete without Italy, nor your pleasure, certainly. How you will enjoy it! But I do not believe you care to go," he continued, observing an expression very far from enjoyment in Minna's face.

Minna's defence of her taste was rendered inaudible by Lady Maria's eager and voluble assurances of her own appreciation of Italian "everything" which, being addressed to Hazelby, fortunately withdrew his attention from Minna, and Lady Maria little knew what a favour she was conferring.

Poor Minna's head really did ache now, and she was glad to return to the quiet of her room. A very gentle knock at the door was followed by Anne's entrance.

"I am not come to disturb you, Minna, but I was so sorry for you at luncheon; and I want to know if you would mind my telling Hazelby, because he has a way of never letting things be talked about that he does not wish, and I am sure he would so help you and me too;" and the hot tears brimmed over in her eyes.

"Oh, no, dearest! I must bear it alone. Don't tell him or anybody yet. I know how kind he would be, but I should feel even less at ease if I thought he was watching."

"But I would not tell him all; I would only just ask him not to talk to you about next summer."

"I think it is better not, thank you, darling; and it will soon be known well enough."

Minna's voice faltered, but she hid her tears in the

cushion of the sofa; and Anne, thinking she was tired, left the room.

Oh, the intense misery of the hours that followed! Sleep, which was the only comfort she hoped for, was rendered impossible by the excitement of mind, which made her headache distracting, and try as she would to be quiet and calm, Minna could not help crying. For a few minutes her mind wandered off to thoughts of the high sense of duty and deep religious feeling which would, Minna felt sure, nerve her aunt to the noblest endurance under any trial; and had she not taught her such lessons that they might be the strengthening guides of her life? Oh! but now, no more, no more of the high and holy teaching she had so loved; no more to be counted among the children of that house. And this banishment was to be her own act. Was it necessary, after all, or was it rather a voluntary martyrdom, such as she had often blamed in characters with which books of fiction at the present day abound? But the motive would prove this; the motive in that false system of self-denial was to do something that should merit God's approval, in proportion as it was painful to human nature. Was this her motive? Oh, no, no! with a clear conscience, Minna could say her motive was only to do her duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call her; not to make her cross, but to take it up when it lay in her path, and to follow Him, not in ways of her own imagining, but according to the guidance of His holy word.

Minna did not believe that God was better pleased with his people's sorrow than with their joy, for has he not said, "The voice of joy and health is in the dwell-

ings of the righteous," but if He now saw fit to let her feel sorrow, it was in mercy surely, and "shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?"

From these soothing reflections she was roused by the entrance of Winifred in her riding habit.

"How are you now, dear Minna? I would not come before I went out, because Anne said she thought you were going to sleep; I am so sorry you have such a headache."

"Oh, I am better now, thank you," said Minna, "and I have scarcely seen you to-day, except at luncheon."

"No," said Winifred, "Anne kept me in the morning; but mamma told me the news about Rhoda, and I am so glad. I hope she will be very happy. But you are not glad, Minna!"

"Oh, yes I am," was all Minna could say. Then after a pause, she added, with an effort, "I like Mr. Thorburn, and I think he will make Rhoda very happy."

Winifred was not quite satisfied, and looked earnestly at Minna, whose eyes were turned away from her. Then she said,—

"Shall I bring you some tea, dear, or will you come to the school-room?"

"It is not time yet, is it?"

"No, not quite."

"I will come if you send Wentworth to call me when tea is ready."

"But are you sure it is good for your head to come? you see they will all be at tea, and there is such a *noise*."

"I am not afraid," said Minna, "my head is so much better now, and perhaps tea will take the pain quite away."

Winifred left the room.

Minna would much rather have spared herself going down again that evening, but a headache was so unusual to her, that she was afraid her aunt would be alarmed if she made it an excuse for not appearing at dinner, and she thought she had better show herself at tea, and have all pitying remarks got over in the school-room, to be secured from observation at dinner. In the school-room also she would find the comfort of Anne's sympathetic presence, as she did not yet join the grown-up party at dinner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOUBTS AND DILEMMAS.

There is a shadow far within your eye
Which hath of late been deepening. You were wont,
Upon the clearness of your open brow,
To wear a brighter spirit, shedding round
Joy like our summer sun. It is not well,
If some dark thought be gathering o'er your soul,
To hide it from affection.

MRS. HEMANS.

WINIFRED went to her room quite convinced that something besides a headache was the matter with Minna. She had never seemed so unconfiding, or so little disposed to rejoice in another person's happiness. Could there be any reason why she disliked the marriage? No, for she said she liked Mr. Thorburn, and that he would make Rhoda happy. What could it be then? Had anything vexed her? Oh, no! Winifred put that thought away at once; Minna never took offence, and if she was vexed, she said so outright; besides, she looked sorry, not vexed.

"Will you dress for the evening at once, or put on your morning-dress again, Miss Maxwell?" said Winifred's maid, unconsciously breaking in upon her reflections.

"I will ask Anne," said Winifred, in a resolute tone, having just made up her mind that Anne was aware of *Minna's* trouble.

"What are you waiting for," said she, again roused by the maid's silent astonishment. "Oh no, I can't dress now, I am in a hurry;" and hastily resuming her morning-frock, she proceeded to Anne's room.

But Anne was already in the school-room, talking to Lady Maria, and watching the door; she had hastened to anticipate all comers, and ward off attention from Minna, should she appear. It was wonderful how trouble and sympathy brought out the genuine nobleness and tenderness of Anne's character, making her worthy of what she would have esteemed the highest compliment—a comparison with her brother. For these two were in reality very much alike in character; but Hazelby had been from his birth a favourite of friends and fortune, which had failed to spoil him, while Anne had had a melancholy and sickly childhood, and bad management had nearly succeeded in spoiling her temper.

Minna soon came down, and having professed herself nearly well, she easily escaped inconvenient observation.

Neither Hazelby, Beatrice, nor Lord Ralegh came in to tea, which was a great comfort; but Winifred fancied Anne watched Minna, and was confirmed in her determination to question Anne.

Dinner and the evening passed off very well. Lady Fortrose would not allow Minna to sing, because of her headache; and Lady Maria was a very good substitute. But the night! How Minna longed for, and yet dreaded it; she longed to be alone and cry, and she dreaded to be kept awake by thinking. For this, however, she was fortunately too tired; she cried herself to sleep, it is true, but then she slept soundly

till she was called in the morning, and woke with a strange weight on her heart, as if something had happened, though what it was she could not at first recall. Suddenly the whole flashed back on her mind.

"O dear!" thought she; "another weary day! When will they all go, that I may tell my aunt? I could bear it better if I might speak of it."

This day, however, was happier than the last had been. The first shock once over, the reality seemed to fade, and the blow that must come found itself a place in the future, there to wait till time should make it a present sorrow.

Not that Minna could or did forget it, but it did not interfere with the day's pursuits; it was not present, and they were; and therefore only when recalled suddenly by any strong association, did the deep shadow of impending gloom fall between Minna and the light of day.

Winifred was relieved, though still somewhat puzzled. That there was something on Minna's mind she was certain, but as she had regained her cheerfulness, it did not much signify, and Winifred ventured to speak of Rhoda's marriage, and referred also to the recollection of Margaret's asking Minna if she remembered some trifling circumstance that occurred then. Minna's reply was accompanied with something so like a sob, that Winifred was quite alarmed, and anxiously set her wits to work to discover the mystery.

"Has Miss Raymond any other sisters besides the one that is going to be married?" said Lady Maria to Beatrice.

"Yes, one," said Beatrice.

"Two," interposed Winifred.

"Oh, yes! so she has; but there is only one at home; the other is married. By-the-bye, how dull it will be for Bessie, now."

"Is that the one at home?" said Lady Maria.

"Yes," said Beatrice, "she is younger than Minna, and has delicate health."

"I don't think Miss Raymond is much pleased at her sister's marriage," continued Lady Maria.

"Oh! you are quite mistaken," cried Beatrice; "she is delighted at it; she told me so herself."

"Well, it is very odd that she has looked melancholy ever since she heard it."

"Oh! but not about that," said Beatrice; "her mother died just at this time last year; indeed I believe yesterday was the very day, so it is natural that the recollection should have made Minna rather low-spirited."

"Was she with her mother then?"

"Yes; she went on purpose. Her brother came to fetch her on New Year's Day; so you see she could not help thinking of it just now."

The conversation was changed, and Winifred went away to practise her music, but she could not help thinking over what she had just heard. Probably Beatrice was right, and it was very inconsiderate of me, thought Winifred, to forget what she had suffered this time last year, but it was odd, too, that Minna should be so very reserved,—she who generally told all her joys and sorrows to me; could she think I should not feel for her? Of course it was natural that Rhoda's happiness should remind her of her mother, who would have rejoiced in it too. How thoughtless and unkind I have been; and that was

why she could not bear my talking of Margaret's wedding.

Winifred tried to persuade herself that she had now discovered the cause of Minna's sorrow, but in her inmost heart she was yet not quite satisfied; there would be no harm at least in telling Anne what she thought, but no, that would be putting Anne between her and Minna, which she did not like doing, so she would be very gentle and affectionate, and try to show Minna that she could and did feel for her.

That afternoon the cousins rode together. Hazelby, Lady Maria, Mr. Greville, and Lord Fortrose being also of the party. Minna seemed to have recovered her cheerfulness, and carried on an animated conversation with Mr. Greville; perhaps he would not have been flattered had he known that she was glad of his company chiefly because it saved her from having to talk to those she knew so well, and it was so much easier to maintain her tranquillity and reserve with a comparative stranger.

She could not help being amused when Lord Fortrose having pointed out the crest of Snowdon, which was particularly clear that day, Lady Maria immediately began to talk of the Alps; Minna did not resist a sly glance at Winifred, but at that moment Lord Fortrose said, "Ah! we shall judge for ourselves in the autumn, Minna," and she coloured scarlet. Winifred could not imagine what was the reason, and felt still more puzzled when Minna proposed to Mr. Greville to canter on, though on such rough ground that it was almost dangerous.

"Take care, take care," cried Lord Fortrose; and *then* in a low voice, as if to himself, he added, "he's

not worthy of Minna if he does not take more care of her than that."

Winifred started. Was it possible? Worthy of Minna! What could her father mean? This idea did not help her much as to the cause of Minna's low spirits, but certainly the more she watched, the more sure she became that Minna was more cheerful with Mr. Greville than with anybody else.

Winifred went home more doubtful than ever.

Minna thought it the most tiring ride she had ever taken, and this opinion escaped her as she walked upstairs with Lady Maria and Winifred.

"I enjoyed it immensely," said Lady Maria, "and I am sure I thought you did. Mr. Greville will be disappointed if he hears you are so tired."

"I don't see what he has to do with it," said Minna.

"Only that he was the only person you spoke to during the ride, so I suppose he tired you."

"How foolish!" said Minna, as Lady Maria shut her door.

"Well! but I thought, too, that you enjoyed the ride," said Winifred.

"Did you, dear?" said Minna, in a tone so sad and weary that Winifred's curiosity was again roused. She said nothing, however, but followed Minna to her room. When they got to the door, Minna seemed to expect Winifred to pass on, but she was resolute, and looked up for permission to enter. Minna was crying.

Winifred locked the door, and knelt down by the side of the chair on which Minna had thrown herself; her face was hid in her hands, and she was sobbing bitterly.

"Minna, dearest, what is it? I know there is

something the matter. Tell me what it is. Do tell me. Oh, Minna! don't cry so; will you not trust me? I would try to help you."

Minna shook her head, and looked up to smile at the loving face, but quickly turned away again, as if the sight of Winifred's tearful earnestness was more than she could bear.

"Have I vexed you?" said Winifred, "or has anybody? Or is it——" and she hesitated; "are you not happy about Rhoda's marriage?"

"Why?" said Minna. "Oh, yes, I am quite glad of it," and her tears flowed again.

"Then you will not tell me?" said Winifred, rising in despair, "and you will not let me help you. Oh, don't try to say it is nothing, for I know you are very unhappy. I never saw you so before; you are quite unlike yourself, Minna, and I am afraid you are forgetting how much I love you, as you will not trust me."

"Oh, don't! don't! pray, Winifred! It is because I do love you—it is that that makes me so very miserable; and if you only knew you would not wonder I am unhappy."

"But me, Minna! because you love me! What can you possibly mean? I don't understand. Does mamma know?"

"Oh, no; don't tell her," said Minna.

"Something about me, and mamma does not know?" said Winifred, in a tone of wondering reflection.

"Not you only—all—everybody—everything. Oh, what shall I do! I never can bear it!"

"Minna," said Winifred, slowly, "I know."

Minna looked up, startled by her grave tone.

"Yes, I know; and it is all Anne's doing. I can never, never forgive her. But you will not, you must not, you shall not," continued she, passionately—"no, it cannot be; don't speak, Minna; don't try to persuade me, for I can never let you go; and, oh! how could Anne be so very, very cruel!"

Hot tears of mingled sorrow and anger were on Winifred's cheeks, but when she stopped, and looked at Minna's despairing face, all anger vanished in affectionate sympathy.

"And you were so miserable about leaving Pentyre; that was it, and you would not make me unhappy. But it is all wrong; it will never be; they will not wish it; nobody could be so unkind. Mamma will never let you go, Minna, so don't cry. You know you are mamma's child, you were given to her for her own; why will you not tell her all about it?"

"I will; but not now; not yet."

"But you would be happier, for she would show you it is impossible. Oh, I wish she had heard that horrid conversation with Anne last year; but I never thought you meant it, Minna."

"You must not be angry with Anne, for she is very kind and very unhappy. I could not help her knowing, or I would not have told her before you, but no one else knows, and Winifred, my darling, you will not say anything?"

"No, I will not. But, Minna, one thing promise me; you will not do anything without mamma's consent?"

"I promise," said Minna, so sadly, that Winifred rejoined quickly—

"Then you think she will?"

"I am almost sure of it," said Minna.

"Oh, no, she cannot; I will not believe it; if she loves you or me, she cannot let you go; and you could not do it when the time comes, Minna; it will kill you. Don't think Bessie would wish it, she loves you far too well to wish you to be unhappy, and you could go and see her, and stay a long time with her, as you did last year, but not to live there; not to leave off calling Pentyre your home. Oh, it was not fair to let us love you so, if you will leave us quite!"

"Winifred, I can't bear it. You must not talk so, or I shall go mad! It is not my wish. Oh, God knows it is not; but if it is my duty, He knows I must do it, and you must not try to make me weak."

"I know it. I beg your pardon for being so selfish, but if it is not your duty?"

"If it is?" said Minna; "go and think more quietly, and you will see it may be, and then you will help me to bear it, I hope, my own darling friend!"

Winifred left the room, and Minna tried to calm herself by solitude and prayer. Most earnestly she prayed for a right judgment, and for strength to bear the trial that must come, for the conviction that her duty lay in this difficult path became every hour more confirmed. She dressed for dinner, and went down, to be informed by her aunt that the ride had certainly done her good, she was looking so much better than yesterday; and the flush on her cheeks, which was all that remained of the previous excitement, did indeed make Minna look very well in her white dress. This evening there was no excuse for not singing, and after one or two duets with Beatrice, Minna was requested to sing the "The Light of Stars," Longfellow's

beautiful words, which she had set to music herself. It was a song that particularly suited Minna; she liked the words, and sang them with perfect expression. She sat down and began, but did not sing the first part as well as usual, for she was absent, and took no note of the meaning of the words, but as she finished the line—

"Serene, and resolute, and still, and calm, and self-possessed,"

she suddenly caught Winifred's eye fixed on her. Instantly the applicability of the words struck Minna so forcibly, that she almost lost her breath, and for a moment turned quite white. Winifred's head sank low on the cushions of the sofa, unnoticed, as she hoped, and, after a moment's pause, she was relieved by hearing Minna sing the following verses, uttering each word with wonderful distinctness, and with a most unusual power and richness of tone—

"And thou, too, whomsoe'er thou art, that readest this brief psalm,
As, one by one, thy hopes depart, be resolute and calm;
Oh! fear not in a world like this, and thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is to suffer and be strong."

There was a sudden silence. The words, well known as they are, yet seemed to bear a new meaning. Minna's voice thrilled through the hearts of her hearers, and more than one looked and listened with equal admiration. Her cheek was flushed, her eye brighter than usual, but its brightness was increased the moment she finished, by a tear that seemed ready to overflow and betray her. She rose hastily, and Hazelby, without thanking her, at once engaged the others in choosing their parts in a quartett, which Minna did not stay to hear. *Before it was* finished, however, she re-entered,

and seated herself with her work at a little distance from the pianoforte. Anne, who was near her, looked up as if to make a remark. "Don't speak," said Minna, under her breath.

But at that moment Lady Fortrose said aloud—

"I dare say Minna will sing the other part, and then you can sing the first, Lady Maria. Come, Minna!"

Minna rose and went to the piano; she liked singing second, and did it very well, and was thankful to stand where her aunt did not see her. The song was very successful. Minna looked perfectly calm, but very pale. She knew her part by ear, and employed herself in thinking while she sang it, so that she left off with an excessively grave face, and Winifred found herself involuntarily applying again those words—

"Serene, and resolute, and still, and calm, and self-possessed."

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE AND DUTY.

Oh! many a shaft at random sent
Finds mark the archer little meant,
And many a word at random spoken
May soothe or wound a heart that's broken.
Lord of the Isles.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow;
And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.
MRS. E. B. BROWNING.

THE next two or three days passed in the same sort of way, Minna becoming more used to the trial, and Anne more hopeful, as she saw how calm Minna was. Anne's fidelity had been put to the proof by Hazelby, who asked her one day if she knew how he had offended Minna.

"Offended her! You have not, have you?" said Anne.

"I did not know it," said he; "but I see she is very much vexed at something; and as she avoids speaking to me, I think I must have offended her."

"Oh, no! that is not it, I assure you," said Anne.

"Then what is it? Is anything the matter?"

"Minna is not vexed; it is all your imagination."

"Perhaps it is also my imagination that your cheeks

have more colour than usual. How do you account for that, Lady Anne? You don't generally blush when I speak to you."

"Oh, Hazelby! don't be unkind, and don't ask me questions, for I can't tell you."

"Then there is something to tell. Is Miss Raymond unhappy, or are you? Now don't cry, Anne. I did not mean to vex you; but I might help you."

"Oh, no, you cannot. I told her you would, but it is no use; and don't be angry with Minna, she is so good."

"I am not angry—what nonsense; but why will she not speak to me?"

"She will—of course she will, only ——"

"Well, what?"

"If you would just not talk about next summer," said Anne, imploringly.

"Next summer! Why, what is the objection to next summer? You are mysterious, Anne."

"I cannot help it, I cannot tell you, so please don't ask me any more," said Anne, very earnestly.

Hazelby looked at her with a puzzled expression, and presently went out of the room, not at all satisfied with the result of his investigations.

A long walk was proposed that same morning. Anne, of course, could not go; but all the rest of the young party accompanied Lord Fortrose.

It was one of those soft, brilliant days that often occur towards the end of January, when the atmosphere is so clear, the sun so bright, and the blue of sea and sky so deep and pure, that one can scarcely believe the winter is not gone. The party set out immediately after breakfast, to get the best of the day.

Their course lay round the edge of the cliffs, where a road had once been levelled, but here and there it had broken away, and the rude path cut in the rock was often rugged and dangerous, being, besides, extremely narrow. Hazelby and Herbert, who knew the way well, acted as guides, and were ready to help in any difficulty.

Minna was happier than she had felt since the receipt of the fatal letter. Susceptible as she always was of the influence of fine weather and beautiful scenery, this bright cheering day gave an almost spring-like tone to her feelings, and she succeeded for some time in banishing the thoughts that would have embittered her enjoyment. This was rendered the more easy because Mr. Greville was generally near her, and while he gratified her by his admiration of the scenes she loved, there was nothing in conversation with him that could touch too nearly either on her past or future life.

Beatrice and Lord Ralegh soon separated themselves from the rest of the party, and turned homewards by a short cut.

Herbert scrambled up and down the cliff, in all possible and apparently impossible places; and attached himself sometimes to Lady Maria, with whom he was much fascinated, and sometimes to Minna and his father, who, with Mr. Greville, were rather behind the others.

Minna was quite enlivened by Herbert's high spirits, and very much amused by his admiration of Lady Maria, who was just the sort of lively beauty to charm a boy of fifteen. He joined Minna in the course of the walk, and detained her behind the rest of the

party, to expatiate on the loveliness of his favourite, and to complain that Hazelby would keep her in conversation, so that he could not get in a word.

Minna was so very glad to see Hazelby engaged with any one but herself, that she could not sympathize very warmly in Herbert's grievance; and she was sorry when he made an excuse for calling to Hazelby, and demanding why he walked so fast that they could not keep up with him. Thereupon he and Lady Maria stopped, and turning back advanced a few steps to meet the others.

"Why, Herbert," said Hazelby, "I thought you liked walking fast."

"Yes; but you are so unsociable, keeping such miles in front."

"I really did not know we were walking so fast," said Lady Maria.

"I did not think you were," said Minna; "but Herbert was anxious for your society, I believe. It was too bad of him to call you back."

"I suppose I ought to be grateful for the compliment," said Lady Maria, with a smile; but she did not look grateful, and Minna felt vexed with Herbert.

They now arrived at a place where the path had broken away, so that it was necessary to go down a steep descent, and come up again by a very rugged track on the other side. There was only room for one person at a time; and as the cliff descended perpendicularly from the edge of the path to the beach some hundred feet below, it was extremely dangerous.

Hazelby went first, and came back, saying it was quite practicable, if the ladies would trust themselves *to his* guidance.

Herbert immediately descended, and waited on the other side for Lady Maria, whom he helped up the precipitous cliff so carefully that she mentally forgave his offence of the previous five minutes.

Hazelby went back to help Minna; it was the first time he had spoken to her during the walk. As she carefully stept down, with her hand on his outstretched arm, he said—

"You enjoy this walk, do you not?"

"Oh, yes," said Minna, heartily.

"And you have no quarrel with me now?"

Minna looked up startled. She was now at the bottom of the descent, and Hazelby said no more till she was safe at the top of the other side; then he said—

"Have I vexed you?"

"No, certainly not."

"I thought I had," said he; "but never mind now. Do look at that blue, and the white sail in the sunshine, how very perfect it is. It is a sky to make one doubt the existence of the clouds that were on it yesterday."

Minna looked and felt the truth of his words, half fancying he must be aware of the double meaning they conveyed to her. He went on.

"That brings back to one's mind the question so often discussed, of whether memory be a curse or a blessing."

"Is there a question about it?" said Minna.

"Why, which way should you decide?"

"Oh, it is a blessing, surely."

"Always? Is it a blessing to remember disagreeable things?"

"Perhaps it may make us all the more grateful for pleasant ones."

"Then is it equally agreeable to remember pleasant things when we are oppressed by sad ones; or do you agree with the poet, that 'A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things?'"

"No, I quite disagree. I think that is the great blessing of happiness in early life; it leaves sunny memories behind, to be a constant source of pleasure—like learning beautiful poetry by heart, which frequently returns to the mind when the book is not at hand, in any scenery or circumstance that recalls it."

"Well, I don't know. I think if I lost all that makes me happy, I had almost rather forget I ever had it."

"Would you?" said Minna, slowly. "But I could not, if I tried; and I do not see how anybody could."

"No, I suppose not; but the question you know is, not if they could, but if they would. I could conceive the same memories that would make one person happy, making another miserable."

"I could not imagine any remembrance making one miserable, unless it was of something wrong that one had done."

"Could you not? But if a person were deprived of everything he valued very highly, and knew he could never have it again, would not the very recollection be a subject of sorrow?"

"Yes, but not misery; at least I earnestly hope not, and I hope I shall never think so."

"I hope you will never have cause," said Hazelby.

And Minna recollected herself, and was silent. When *she spoke* again it was to change the subject. The rest

of the walk was very pleasant. The path ended abruptly on an open common, or down, which extended for a considerable distance on the top of the cliff, and then a wood, which skirted the hill, clothing it on one side nearly to its summit, led them through winding tracks into the valley, from whence rocky lanes, almost as narrow and sheltered as those of Devonshire fame, reconducted them to the village of Pentyre Mwr.

"Well, we have had a lovely 'last walk,' have we not?" said Hazelby, as they entered the lodge gates.

"Last walk!" thought Minna; "can he know?"

But Lady Maria replied.

"Yes, indeed, a most charming walk; and I am very sorry it is the last."

"So am I," cried Herbert; "but must you really go to-morrow?"

"I fear we must, indeed," said Lady Maria.

"I wish I could persuade you and Ralegh to stay another day," said Lord Fortrose. "Hazelby, don't you think you can persuade him?"

"I should be delighted," said Hazelby; "but unfortunately, you know, I am off myself to-morrow. Since I have had the honour to hold her Majesty's commission, my time is no longer my own."

"Oh, you go to London, do you?" said Mr. Greville; "then I shall have the pleasure of your company."

"What, are you off, too?" said Lord Fortrose. "I declare, this general defection is too bad. How long do you stay in London, Hazelby?"

"Much longer than I shall like, I am afraid; but you are pretty sure to see me here in the spring."

"Why we are all to meet in the spring, I suppose, on account of Beatrice."

"Yes," said Lady Maria, and turning to Minna she added, "We shall then meet in an official capacity; by-the-bye, are we to wear blue or pink?" And the interesting subject of bridesmaids' dresses was not exhausted when they reached the house.

Minna was greatly relieved to hear of Hazelby's intended departure. She did not know he was going so soon, and she felt that her explanations would be more easily got over when he was gone.

Lord Ralegh and Lady Maria took their departure early on the following morning, but Hazelby and Mr. Greville stayed till the afternoon, intending to take the night-train to London.

Minna was sitting with Beatrice in their morning-room, when Hazelby came in to say good-bye. After a few parting words with Beatrice, who then passed out of the room to speak to Mr. Greville, Hazelby advanced to Minna.

"Well, good-bye," said he, "till the spring, and be sure you don't play us false then, as you did last year at Athenry."

Minna coloured. "I am going home soon," said she.

"Are you? The sooner the better, then, that you may be back in time for Beatrice's wedding; good-bye." And he shook hands with her cordially, and was gone.

She could not go out to see Mr. Greville, and remained looking out of the window, where Hazelby had left her. But she saw nothing, her eyes were full of tears. Somebody entered the room behind her; she heard the rustle of silk, and thought it was Beatrice.

A gentle hand was laid on her shoulder. Minna

did not dare to look round, for fear of showing her tears.

"What is it, dear?" said Lady Fortrose, gently.

A violent start betrayed Minna's surprise, when she heard the voice. She tried to control herself, and answer calmly, but her strength gave way; she covered her face with her hands, and cried bitterly.

"My dear Minna, what has happened? You alarm me; calm yourself, dear, and try to speak. Are you ill?"

Minna shook her head. "Your room," murmured she.

Lady Fortrose understood, and drawing Minna's arm within hers, she led her to her own much-loved sitting-room. There Minna felt safe from interruption, and there, amid sobs and heartbroken regrets, she poured out to her aunt's astonished ears the pent-up sorrow.

Lady Fortrose was struck with surprise and dismay, which changed into real distress when she found how decided Minna was to pursue the course which conscience pointed out as her duty. At first Lady Fortrose tried to dissuade her, by doubting the necessity of the case, but Frank's letter was against that argument; then she insisted on asking Mr. Raymond—"And if he wishes it, dear, it will be time enough to think of what will be such a terrible trial to us all."

But to this Minna would not consent.

"He would never say he wished it, and Bessie would never let him, and all the while they might be feeling that it is my duty, if I could only see it. Besides, though I shall never be as happy again as I have been here, I should not be happy if I remained

here against my conscience; I should feel it wrong to be happy, and if I go," added she, with a faltering voice, "I may at least try and be happy in doing right."

"Oh, but Minna, my darling child, you can go and see how they get on, and help them whenever they want you, and stay if Bessie is ill; but yet, be my child—come back to me whenever they can spare you; and who knows what may happen? Bessie may marry, or your father may go and live with Frank, and then you would come home to us again. Do not decide; wait this year, and see how things go on."

Minna sat thinking over this way of escape, but it did not satisfy her—it seemed only half right.

"If I go only as a visitor," she said, "I can never be of much real use. I cannot relieve Bessie from Rhoda's duties, which will now fall to her charge, and I cannot enter into home cares, so as to be of use in lightening them. My father will not learn to give me his confidence, nor to feel repose in dependence upon me, so I should only do half the good I might —only half my duty. I think I must quite identify myself with home to be really useful there. Do you not think so, dear aunt?" added she, looking up.

"You are right, dearest, quite right; though I could almost wish you were wrong."

"I am turning your own weapons against you, dear auntie, for you taught me what are a woman's home-duties."

"I did, my darling, hoping to prepare you for the life to which I thought you were destined, and you are prepared, I trust, though for a very different life."

"Yet your lessons were only the more needed, as I

shall have trials which I never contemplated; and oh, how thankful I am that you taught me to be happy on principle; for, when I am most sorrowful, most lonely, and longing for you and for all at this dear, beautiful place, I shall remember that no lot of God's appointing can rightly be a subject of regret. You told me that, do you remember, when we talked of Anne's lameness, and I told her, and she says she never forgets it, and never repines now at what she used to call her hard fate. And my fate seems hard too, does it not, dear auntie?" continued Minna, looking up with tearful eyes.

Lady Fortrose embraced her with answering tears.

"You are noble and true-hearted, my own darling, and I see you have judged rightly, but I cannot believe we shall be parted long. And you will be happy; I trust and pray that you may. And you know how we all love you, and shall wish for you back again, so do not give up the thought of returning. But you shall go, and be quite your father's own child again, and be a blessing to him and to Bessie. I know she loves you fondly, and will value your sacrifice as it should be valued; but how shall I comfort all you leave here? I despair of your uncle's consent, for he will scarcely see as I can how you may be wanted at home; and poor Winifred, what will she do without you, Minna?"

"She is partly prepared by the conversation of which I told you, and if she sees you think it right, too, she will bear it bravely, I daresay. You know she would expect me to do right," said Minna, trying to smile.

"Pentyre will not know itself without you though, my darling, and the spring days that you love so much,

will seem quite mournful. And must it be as soon as you said?"

"I think so—I fear so; but we shall know better when I have written home. You will tell my uncle. I hear him coming, and I cannot meet him now." And Minna left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

GUYSBROOKE.

Love is never lost, though hearts run waste;
Its tides may gush 'mid swirling, swaling deserts,
Where no green leaf drinks up the precious life;
Yet love doth evermore enrich itself—
Its bitterest waters run some golden sands!

GERALD MASSEY.

Few more ready than a child to share an elder's grief,
And many an aching wearied heart hath owned their love's relief.
They do not proffer counsel, sage in words of measured tone;
But quivering lip and tearful eye proclaim the grief their own.

IT was the evening of the 25th of February. In a low room, not very well lighted by two composition candles, Bessie Raymond was seated at work; her face was very pale, and she looked sad, but she rose quickly to meet Minna, who entered the room with her arms full of books and music.

"They are all unpacked at last, Bessie; will you help me to arrange them?" and she dropped her burden in a heap on the table. Bessie took one of the candles, and placed it on the top of a low bookcase, and then she knelt down, and began removing some of the books in the lowest shelf of it.

"What are you doing?" said Minna.

"Making room for your books; these can go up-

stairs; I only put them here because the shelves looked so bare."

"Oh, thank you," said Minna, cheerfully, and she began to replace with her own books those which Bessie had taken out.

"Now, Bessie, don't kneel any longer, you will be so tired."

"Are not you tired, Minna, with unpacking all those books? you have been nearly an hour at them."

"No, I have not been unpacking all the time." No, indeed she had not, for once in the midst of her work —was it very weak—she had sat down to cry, giving way to the associations called up by the sight of her books, and remained thinking of Pentyre, and the change that had passed over her life, till warned by the gathering darkness that it was time to finish.

Minna had now been a fortnight at Guysbrooke; she had come in time to see Rhoda married, and to receive her praises and heartfelt thanks for the comfort her noble resolution gave to her father and sisters. Minna needed comfort herself.

Lord Fortrose had taken her to Bristol, thus assisting, much against his will, in what he called her voluntary exile; and when he resigned her to Frank's care, it was with many sad and affectionate farewells, and grave injunctions to Frank to take care of her, and value her as she deserved. "And remember, Minna," he added, "I have never given my consent to your leaving us, and I shall forgive you only when you return."

Minna had written to her father to propose the change, and he had greeted the offer with the most undisguised satisfaction and pleasure. When he told

his daughters, which he did not until he had answered Minna's letter, Bessie's exclamation of incredulous delight was instantly checked by a far different, though not less loving thought.

"Oh, father," cried she, "you have not said 'yes;' you will not let her come."

"Not let her, Bessie! why, what can you be thinking of? Do you suppose I would refuse to take my own child home, when she asks it? I thought you loved your sister."

"Oh, yes, papa, that I do indeed, but does she really wish to come? Can she? I thought she could never leave Pentyre."

"But my dear Bessie, why should she ask to come if she does not wish? See her own very words,—'Will you let me come home, and be your own child again, and help you to take care of Bessie; it will make me so happy to be doing my duty to you, and I will try and make up for Rhoda's absence, though I fear I can never be half as useful.' There you see, poor dear, would you have me write and tell her not to come? I only wish your dear mother could have known that the dear child would turn back to her own old home at last; but I wonder what has brought her to it; some vexation or disappointment I suppose, but I wont have her teased for reasons; she has asked to come home, and home she shall come, and stay while I have a roof to shelter her pretty head. I never could have asked her to do it, but now she asks it herself, I can but thank God for the blessing, and hope he has forgiven me for letting her go."

What could Bessie say or do. Her heart told her that Minna was making a sacrifice, but her father had

accepted it, and there was nothing remaining but to give her a warm welcome, and try to make her happy; yet Bessie felt as if she herself were to blame for Minna's sorrow, and longed to speak her sympathy, but Minna gave her no opening; fearing to let Bessie discover the extent of the sacrifice, she disavowed it altogether, and at once acquiesced in her father's view of the case; she had wished to come home, so she had come, and nobody pitied her.

Many people dislike pity, but there is no greater mistake than to confound sympathy with pity, and Minna, in her fear of receiving the one, which she felt would be incongruous, shut herself out from the other, and increased her sufferings tenfold by not allowing Bessie to comfort her; but perhaps it was only natural that Minna, being determined not to regret the steps she had taken, should be equally resolved not to admit that there was room for regret; had her sacrifice been acknowledged in the first instance it might have been different.

Rhoda's marriage passed off very quietly, and then Minna had her first introduction to Mr. and Mrs. Percival, who had not, as it proved, the family of young children with which she had once endowed them in imagination; but with them appeared a young lady, apparently about seventeen, who was the daughter of Mr. Percival by a former marriage; his present wife had no child.

Bessie appeared to be on very friendly terms with Mrs. Percival, who was a kind, lady-like person, too young to be taken for Hermione's mother, even if the very striking difference in their appearance and manner had not prevented such a supposition.

Minna found that these were the only neighbours with whom her father and sisters were acquainted, and their life at Guysbrooke was uniform and monotonous. Bessie's health was certainly not improved; a very little walk tired her now, and she was quite unable to take any part with the schools or poor people, in whom Rhoda had already made herself an interest. Minna, hearing her loss in these respects lamented by Mrs. Percival, immediately offered to take her place, wherever it was possible to do so, saying, she had had some experience in a village-school, and would be very glad to have a class there. On Sundays, therefore, she attended it, and forced herself to care about the Janes, and Elizas, and Marthas, while her little Gwendolens, and Gwenellas, and Gwyllas were constantly present to her mind.

Letters from Pentyre were, of course, like the sunshine of her day; they were very frequent—indeed, at first, no day passed without bringing one—even Stuart's first attempt at letter-writing was addressed to Minna. The parting with him had been touching and characteristic in the highest degree. Minna had resolved on telling him herself, and as he sat on her knee one day, she told him she was going away, and not coming back to live at Pentyre any more. At first he would not believe her, and she had much trouble to persuade him she was not joking. At last she said—

"Do I look as if I was joking, Stuart?" Then, seeing tears in her eyes, he knew it was true, and began in a strain of half-passionate, half-mournful exclamations—

"Who will play with us? Who will talk to Annie,

and make her laugh? Who will go in the boat, and love all the woods and mountains so much? Who will tell me stories when I am good, and look sorry when I am in a great passion? Who will shut herself up in a box with me, and not get out?"

This last very singular lamentation, uttered as it was in a tone of the deepest dejection, made Minna smile in spite of her tears, but he went on without noticing her.

"Oh! I will ask papa, and he will not let you, for I don't love anybody best, Minna, except you and mamma, and I shall just go on crying till you come back, and Went will see me cry, and it is your fault, Minna."

"But Stuart, you make me cry you see, and you don't want to do that, do you?"

"I know you never cry, Minna; but you are crying now," he continued, in a tone of surprise; "and did I make you cry? Oh then, I wont—only don't go, please; there, I said please, and then you always do it, so you wont go."

Minna could only kiss him, and change the subject, by asking which of the ornaments on her table he would like to have for his own. Stuart brightened at this, and chose a little bronze dog, on which his affections had long been set. Minna said it should remain there till she went away, and then Stuart should have it; and after engaging to come and see it every day until it should come into his possession, he went away to select a suitable position in the nursery for the promised dog; but he said a few days after—

"I don't want it soon, Minna, so stay a long time."

His letter contained very few words, written in an immense hand, but ending with "do come home."

It was accompanied by a long one from Anne, whose regrets at the loss of Minna, were mingled with a certain bitter recollection of her own share in the primary cause of it. Her letters were always long and affectionate, and full of interest to Minna; she had generally something kind to say too about Bessie, and this often gave the sisters a pleasant subject of conversation.

This evening, after Minna had finished arranging her books, she took out her work, and sat down.

"Well," said Bessie, "now tell me what you think of Hermione; or rather, did you see her?"

"I shall tell you nothing till you lie down and make yourself quite comfortable;" and she took Bessie's work from her, and made her settle herself on the sofa. "Now are you quite comfortable?"

"Quite," said Bessie; "now begin."

"Well, Mrs. Percival was at home, and asked affectionately after you, so I said you were pretty well."

"But did you see Hermione?"

"Yes, but I did not find out much about her; she hardly spoke."

"But do you think her pretty?"

"Yes, rather; but she does not look pleasant. I like Mrs. Percival's face much better."

"Oh, yes; she is charming—so kind and gentle. Hermione is very unlike her."

"Yes: she is like Mr. Percival in face, but not at all in character, I should think."

"I should fancy her rather like what he was once,"

said Bessie. "He was in the army before he became a clergyman."

"Was he?" said Minna.

"Yes, and was wounded at one of those Indian battles—I don't remember which—and then he was sent home on sick leave, and when he got well he determined to become a clergyman; and then he married Mrs. Percival, and took Hermione home."

"Where had she lived before?"

"With some of her mother's relations, who sent her to a school in London."

"Oh, then she has not long been under Mrs. Percival's care."

"She was thirteen when they came here, and that was when she left school, I believe."

"And has she been here ever since?"

"She goes away every now and then to stay with her aunt and cousins in London, and then she has masters. She plays and draws quite beautifully."

"How did you find out all this, Bessie?"

"Oh, you know we have been here five months now, and Mrs. Percival told us a good deal about Hermione when first we came, for she was not here then, and since she has been at home we have seen something of her, though not much. Mrs. Percival said she was so glad we were young, as we should be companions for Hermione; but I don't think she is of that opinion. I suppose she will take a fancy to you, though."

"Why?" said Minna, "I have not taken a fancy to her."

"But you will, by-and-bye; she is very fascinating."

"Perhaps; but I never think the word fascinating describes a person one could thoroughly trust."

"Well, I don't know any word that describes Hermione so well."

"But she ought to have fascinated me," said Minna.

"Oh, it is different with you; you have lived all your life with such very delightful people that you are not so easily pleased as I am."

"More easily, I think. I am pleased with Mrs. Percival, and you don't call her fascinating."

"Oh, but she seems so good, one cannot help liking her."

"Yes, I think I like good people better than what are called charming people."

"But when they are both?" said Bessie.

"That is very rare," said Minna; "here comes papa. Shall I ring for tea?"

"Yes, please," said Bessie; "but, Minna, I wish you would not ask me if you shall ring; you are the eldest."

"I forgot," said Minna; and it was true she often forgot she was at home, and fancied that Bessie must act the lady of the house; when any strangers were present she frequently left Bessie to do the honours, as if she herself were only a visitor, and thus she had unconsciously drawn upon herself the accusation she had mentally passed on Hermione, of not making herself sufficiently agreeable in her father's house; but this was wholly unintentional on Minna's part; whether it was equally so on that of Miss Percival remains to be seen.

At present Minna's home was not a lively one; Frank seldom came from Sandsclyst, having more occupation there than he could well attend to; he had been pleased and relieved at Minna's coming home, though

he could not account for her sudden resolution, and he never asked her whether it really was on account of Rhoda's leaving, as Mr. Raymond had positively forbidden any such question being put to her, for he imagined it would appear as if her return were considered unwelcome. Guysbrooke was not a favourable place for invalid walks, so Minna generally walked alone, after taking a little stroll with Bessie in the middle of the day. The village, which was nearly a mile from the high road, was connected with it by a lane, which might be called picturesque in some places, but it was up-hill all the way, and yet there was no view from any part of it. A few cottages were scattered over an open space about a hundred yards before it joined the high road, and opposite to the entrance of the lane, the post-office, and a few more cottages stood in a row, looking as if they had been travelling along the road, and had stopped there by mistake, and so they had almost, at least they were never intended to be there as cottages, having been built originally by the former owner of Guysbrooke Park, to serve as stables for the coach-horses which, in the days when railroads were not, used to be numerous, and justly renowned for their excellence, on the high-road between —— and ——. Many a fine team had been stabled where those cottages now stood, and on the king's birthday, long ago, the inhabitants of Guysbrooke used to throng to the top of the lane, to see the eight fine horses belonging to the royal mail, and its rival, the "Quicksilver," led out from their stalls, decked with ribbons and new harness; it was the one sight, the one gala day, that quiet village boasted, and now that has long been forgotten, and the railroad

three miles off has not supplied a substitute for its departed splendours.

Soon after the present Sir Antony Guysbrooke became lord of the manor, from whence his name was derived, his steward wrote to him, representing that these stables were useless, the coaches being now taken off the road, and that as many of the labourers on the estate lived at an inconvenient distance, it would perhaps bea dvisable to turn the empty buildings into cottages, particularly as this desirable change could be effected at a trifling cost; Sir Antony, who neither knew nor cared a fig about the stables, cottages, or labourers, counted the cost, and gave his consent, and when he next visited Guysbrooke, the first time indeed that he came there as its owner, he inquired whose frightful red brick cottages they were; the steward certainly had not consulted the picturesque, but he had taken care to make the houses comfortable, and weather-proof, and they were extremely popular, so Sir Antony graciously overlooked the mistake he had sanctioned.

CHAPTER XXI.

TIME AND TIDE.

For, though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used
Of absent friends and memories unforsook;
And had we seen each other's face, we had
Seen haply each was sad.

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade,
And drooped his wing, and mourned he
For his own boundless glittering sea.

MRS. B. BROWNING.

NEARLY opposite to Mr. Raymond's present abode, but not quite so far down the lane, was a gate leading to an old-fashioned looking house; it was built of red brick, now rather the browner for age, and would have been very ugly but for its perfect plainness; there was no pretension, no ornament of any kind; the three rows of windows, one above another, five in a row, were in painted white frames, and the glass entrance-door, between the drawing-room and dining-room windows, was also graced by an imitation white pillar on each side. Roses, jessamine, and honeysuckles, climbed up the red wall, and were carefully cut away from the windows, where however a stray flower would now and then look in, but its intrusion was oftener

resented than admired. There were no young eyes to be gladdened by its young beauty, and though Mrs. Guysbrooke, the dweller in this house, loved flowers, she thought them, like other things, untidy, if they were out of what she considered their proper place.

Mrs. Guysbrooke was the mother of the owner of the park above-mentioned; her husband, a younger brother of the late baronet, had died young, leaving three sons, of whom Sir Antony was the eldest. Mrs. Guysbrooke had taken up her abode here, that her sons might be under the eye of their uncle, an old bachelor, who then inhabited the great house; he wished her to come and live there, but she being of a very independent character, had decidedly declined; and now when her son made her the same offer, it met with the same reply.

So Guysbrooke House was shut up, for Sir Antony, who had married just before succeeding to the property, lost his wife within the same year, and having consigned his infant heir to the charge of his mother, he immediately went abroad; first, however, bestowing upon the child the name of Clarence, in memory of the lost and lamented Clara Lady Guysbrooke, whose monument in white marble, formed a striking object in the village church, and attracted Minna's sympathy, by the words "Aged twenty-one," inscribed beneath the name. She asked Bessie for an account of the lady whose early death was thus commemorated, and heard the particulars recorded above. All Bessie's information had been derived from Mrs. Percival, for Mrs. Guysbrooke led a very retired life, and had not called on the Miss Raymonds; she was a proud woman and had no idea of calling on "nobody knows who;"

people that came from "nobody knows where," so Bessie had only once or twice met the pretty little boy and longed for his acquaintance, though not for that of his haughty-looking grandmother. This was all Minna learned at present of the neighbours among whom her lot was now cast.

The interest inspired by such information was of course very transient, and though she tried to converse with Bessie on subjects common to both, Minna's heart turned often with a longing to the dear ones she had left; this was more especially the case on Sundays; the long quiet morning service had that soothing influence which is so apt to revive sad memory, and though Mr. Percival had a good voice, and an impressive manner, his excellent and useful village sermons too often failed to keep Minna from mentally retracing the scenes and occupations of other Sundays; walks to and from church, pure happy worship uninterrupted by regretful musings, and long delightful talks, recalling each word, each tone, of voices she wearied to hear again. Oh! who that has felt it can forget the utter weariness of that hopeless longing; one may long for a well-known face, a much-loved scene, but the longing of the ear is more intense, more unsoothed, more wearying. If the joy of our eyes is gone, we yet may see "heaven's own blue," and think "they see it also, though we see not them;" but if the voice that made our heart's gladness be silent to our ear, what earthly music can supply its place? So it was with Minna, now: often when her grave countenance and uplifted eyes spoke her mind engaged and interested, it was not Mr. Percival's voice *that* so fixed her attention, not his words that filled her

thoughts, but she heard words that had been spoken in days of sunshine, and voices whose tone outlasting that brightness returned to her in softened cadence, like dropping tears from the clouds that now surrounded her. And at night, too, the stars so often watched, where she first learned to love them, seemed to know and feel for her lonely heart. She often stayed now gazing at them without even thinking, letting the dreams and fancies of past and future float over her mind, beneath that bright influence, and wondering what was their destiny, and what would be her own fate! For to be always here, to nurse Bessie, and comfort her father, chosen duties though they were, seemed scarcely a scope in which her future could be contained: "Why have I known and loved what I *have* known and loved if this is the end? And yet why not? what better life could I choose? What brighter lot am I fit for? Why should I live in this restless wearying hope, when I do not know what to hope for? I cannot hope for what I love best, for when I had it I resigned it; I prayed to God for strength to leave it, I cannot pray to Him to send me back; and as to hope, I will have none that cannot turn to prayer; so to be happy here, to love the duty I find at hand, and oh! to be not forgotten, but always, always loved, that shall be my hope and prayer, and to see them again; years and years may pass, but that prayer shall still be mine, and still I may love hope, and rejoice in it, though not blindly, as I once did,—sunshine blinded me, I think." And Minna smiled, though the tears stood in her eyes, as they too often did in these long wakeful nights. Minna had almost promised to fulfil her engagement as bridesmaid

to Beatrice, and early in May she received a most pressing invitation to Athenry, where the wedding was to take place. But Bessie had been very unwell since the spring set in, and her increasing weakness made Minna so anxious, that she would not leave her even for a week, and was therefore obliged to renounce this opportunity, so eagerly desired, of seeing her dearest friends again. It was a great disappointment to Lady Fortrose, and she was even inclined to think Bessie ought to have insisted on overruling her sister's scruples; but Bessie knew nothing of this second sacrifice till too late, as Minna never alluded to the wedding till it was over, and then all the regret appeared to be on Bessie's part; the resolution however had cost Minna many tears, for she had kept up her cheerfulness ever since she left Pentyre, by the help of this hope of spring.

Spring, therefore, was less bright to her than it had ever been before, and her favourite month of May she scarcely recognised; but though no outside influences shed sunshine over her life, no gloomy shadow appeared upon it; she never oppressed Bessie with that air of wo-begone resignation which is in some people far more worrying than even an outburst of impatience would be; and by a constant habitual recognition of God's hand in every trial, great and small, she trained herself to believe a blessing when she could not see it. And there was a real satisfaction in the cares and responsibilities that now devolved on her; without some such experience she could never have known what her father's house really was, nor could she have sympathized with her brothers and sisters, in after life, as she could now do, whatever might be their lot.

As summer advanced she often wandered alone through the narrow shady lanes, and learned to love their luxuriant green banks and hedges. Sometimes a recollection of the broad waving beeches at Pentyre would cross her mind, as she looked on the dark-green elms in Mrs. Guysbrooke's fields, and a longing for the whispering twilight of deep wood-walks—her summer delight in bygone days—would, for a moment, check the sense of present enjoyment; but Minna strove earnestly against repining comparisons, and there was, besides, a sort of self-respect which came to her aid; it seemed weak, almost dishonourable, to mourn over a step she had thought, and still did think, right.

On her return from one of these walks one day, Bessie asked her if she had met Miss Percival.

"No," said Minna.

"She has been here, and she asked which way you were gone, and said she would try and overtake you. She is not like you, for she does not like solitary walks, and wants to have you for a companion.

"I shall be very glad; I like having a companion; though lonely walks are sometimes very pleasant. But why did Miss Percival never ask me before, I wonder?"

"She does not care for long walks, except in beautiful summer weather like this. How lovely it is. I sat in the garden till Hermione came."

"I am so glad you did, dear; but I am afraid you were lonely."

"No; I am never lonely out of doors; there is so much to admire, and to think of; and then I always feel so thankful for sight. It is strange how we forget to thank God for such a gift, though He

might as easily have withheld it from us as from others."

"Very strange," said Minna, thoughtfully; "and yet I never thought of it till now. I have often thanked God for beautiful things, and the happiness they give, but not for the power of seeing or hearing them."

"Hearing!" said Bessie; "but do you value that as much as seeing?"

"I scarcely know. Sometimes I think it is better still."

"But beautiful days, Minna! flowers and the sky; you, who love colour so much, must surely feel that to lose the delight of seeing them ——"

"Oh, yes, and the sea! but then the sound of it! Oh, Bessie! if you knew how I love the sound of the sea, the distant rustling hum, or the dash and roar close to me, much as I love its colour and its grandeur, to see and not hear it, would be only half the enjoyment."

"How you must miss it," said Bessie, gently, looking at her sister with deep interest.

Minna did not see the look, and went on, thrown off her guard, as it were, by her favourite subject.

"Miss it! I thirst for it; I pine for it! When I wake in the morning, I hear the rustling of leaves, like its waking murmur, and I feel day after day, as if one sight, one glimpse of its blue, would give a new spring to my life; oh! what I would give to see it; it would do me so much good."

"And I never knew this! You never say a word to me of Minna, what you really love. Why do you not? I would have told you where you might see the sea, perhaps; for you can, on a very clear day, just

catch its even outline from the top of the Beacon Hill, that rough brown hill behind Guysbrooke Park.

"Can I really? I will walk there, thank you, Bessie."

"But I am afraid you will be disappointed, for you will only see the faintest line of blue on the horizon."

"Never mind, if I can only fancy I see it. I will ask Miss Percival to walk there with me to-morrow; she can show me the way, perhaps."

"But, Minna, why will you never talk to me of Pentyre, or let me know what interests you?"

"I cannot," said Minna; "it is no use; and I had rather talk of what we both know; but I wish you had seen Pentyre."

"Oh! so do I, so very, very much, for then I could have been a pleasanter companion to you; but you used to tell me about it, and I have not forgotten you once told me you could not leave it; and I wonder how you could."

"So do I," said Minna.

"Then why ——" began Bessie.

"Because I thought it right; and you are not sorry I came home?"

"Oh, no! only I hope and trust it was not only for me; if I thought so, I should never be happy again."

"There was another reason," said Minna, very quietly. She meant her father's loneliness; but Bessie did not guess this. She saw, however, that Minna did not wish to be questioned, and only said—

"Thank you; that is a weight off my mind; but I am very sorry."

The next day Minna and Miss Percival set out to

walk to the Beacon Hill, Minna having proposed this walk to her companion, alleging the extensive view as her motive—she said nothing about the sea. The walk was a tiring one, being up-hill all the way; but Hermione Percival was a pleasant companion when nothing crossed her, and the conversation did not flag. There were many subjects of common interest between her and Minna, and a great similarity in their tastes. Hermione was very musical, and had a great talent for drawing.

"Did you ever see such an uninteresting place as Guysbrooke?" said she to Minna. "They talk of Devonshire for scenery, but I am sure this is not a good specimen of it. Your sister says the country was much prettier where you used to live; in Kent, was it not?"

Minna's mind had gone off to Pentyre; but she recollected herself, and said—

"Yes, King's Holm was very pretty; I think Kent is generally considered so."

"I should think you must regret it sometimes," continued Hermione; "and then, probably, you had some society there, and here there is not a creature. If it were not for going to London sometimes, I don't know what I should do."

Minna smiled.

"I don't think I care much about society, and I do not like London."

"Ah! you have always lived in a country village, so you don't feel it, perhaps; but you see I was not brought up here."

"No," said Minna, much amused.

"And, of course, I cannot take an interest in the

schools and cottages, and so on; it is not at all in my line, and as that is the only thing to be done here, it follows that I have nothing to do; it is all very well if one is brought up as a clergyman's daughter."

"How do you mean?" asked Minna; "were not you brought up as a clergyman's daughter?"

"No; papa was not a clergyman when he married my mother; and I was brought up as she had been, in London, with masters and mistresses; and then when I was left in my aunt's charge, she sent me to a fashionable school, and, of course, intended to take me out with her own daughters; but then papa married, and became a clergyman, and here I have been set down ever since."

"But you were very young then, were you not?"

"I was fourteen, and as tall as I am now, and I was not treated like a child at school; so you see I was too old to take to all Mrs. Percival's ideas; but we get on very well, for I do just as I like, except living here; only I often wish papa had not left the army. But here we are at the top of the hill at last. It is a fine view, is it not? Look at that long range of hills that terminates so abruptly; one can see the sea between it and the next rise sometimes."

"I can just see it now," said Minna; "at least, there is a perfectly flat line on the horizon, which can be nothing else, though the colour is almost imperceptible. There! Yes, it is," she exclaimed, as a gleam of sunlight revealed the distant blue. "Oh! I am so glad."

"How enthusiastic you are," said Hermione. "I thought you were such a very quiet person; it is quite a relief to me to see you get excited."

"Such a very quiet person! A change must indeed have come over me," thought Minna. She had never been considered very quiet, for, till she left Pentyre, she had never learned to suppress or disguise her feelings; but now the constant habit of self-control had indeed given a calmness to her manner, which was almost striking in one so young. "I am very fond of the sea," she said; "and I have not seen it for some time."

"Is King's Holm near the sea?"

"Oh, no; it is quite inland."

"Oh, then you have gained *something* by coming here, which is more than I have."

"But surely you gained something in coming away from school? And you have had time to get fond of Guysbrooke."

"There is nothing to get fond of that I can see."

"But I have got fond of some of the people already."

"Have you! I dare say you were born for the sort of life, like mamma; but I was not."

"Then do you not think we were born for the life in which we find ourselves placed?" said Minna, mentally thanking Hermione for reminding her of an argument so suited to her own case.

"But I did not find myself at first in such a life; I was not meant for it."

"Then how came you to be placed in it? Does not God know?"

"Yes, certainly; but one cannot argue in that way. Of course, when we are born, God places us where He intends us to be, and that is our proper place."

"Then do you think that if a person is born very poor, and afterwards has a fortune left him, he has no *right* to take it, because he ought to remain poor?"

"No; because he may make a good use of the fortune."

"And I think we may make a good use of any fortune God provides for us, and serve Him in any position."

"But suppose it seems quite unsuited to us?"

"Then I think we should take the more pains to suit ourselves to it."

"But we may feel that somebody else would do it much better."

"That is very likely; but if it were not good for us, would God place us there?"

"Then you think that God takes notice of every event, and every change in our lives?"

"I am sure of it," replied Minna. "He not only notices but orders them."

"Well, I don't know; one so constantly sees people in the wrong place, that I am rather doubtful whether chance has not a great deal to do with it."

"Oh, you believe in that invisible and careless idol?"

"Idol! what an odd idea."

"Surely it is an idol to many people; for they put it in the place of God?"

"But they do not pray to it?"

"No; I rather wonder they do not."

"Oh, that would be absurd."

"Not much more absurd than giving it credit for doing what God has done, and done, perhaps, in answer to the prayers of some who believe in Him."

"Oh, but one must believe in chance sometimes; for instance, it was a chance that you came to live at Guysbrooke; and a very good chance, too," she added, gaily.

"I assure you nothing was ever further from chance," answered Minna; "and if there is any good in it, it is God's doing. But," she added, more lightly, "you will not convert me. I no more believe in chance than I do in Vishnu, or Woden, and I hope you do not, really; life would be so much less noble or satisfying if chance had any part in it."

Bessie was delighted to hear that Minna had seen the sea, and was not disappointed with the slight momentary glimpse; but it was much better than nothing; and that intense, longing thirst was in a measure relieved.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WEEK TOO LATE.

It must be so, the feeling heart must oft receive a wound,
Must often be compelled to part from those it twined around;
It must be so, life's shadows still must darken o'er our way,
And darkness those bright places fill where shone joy's happiest ray;
It must be so, the friends beloved who cheered life's earlier day,
By time estranged, by death removed, pass one by one away,
Till oft ere half its sands can fall we look around and sigh,
How many now my tears recall, whose smiles once blessed my eye.

THE summer passed away. There was not much change in Bessie's health since it began, but she was more than ever dependent on Minna, and Minna's prospects of seeing her aunt and cousins again, seemed proportionately more hopeless.

A new anxiety had fallen upon Mr. Raymond. The last mail had brought no letter from Margaret, and it was the first she had missed since she went out. Minna and Bessie were willing to believe that a mistake of some sort had delayed the letter, but Mr. Raymond was distressed, and anxiously waited for the next mail to arrive. Minna too had her own burden to bear. She had a mournful letter from Anne, announcing Hazelby's departure for the Crimea; he was bent on going, and left heavy fearful hearts behind. Poor Anne seemed very disconsolate. She wrote from

London, but was going abroad immediately, and deeply lamented her hard fate in not seeing Minna before she went; but this was hopeless. "Hazelby in danger, Beatrice married, and you gone away; oh, Minna! it is all very miserable at Pentyre, now." So Anne wrote, and Minna cried long and bitterly over Anne's sorrow, and her own. How glad she would have been to see Anne, to sympathize with her fears, and to comfort her, and then the last sentence, "All very miserable at Pentyre." "Ought I not to have been with my aunt now?" thought Minna; "she seems to have lost so much all at once. Beatrice, Anne, and Hazelby all gone!"

Oh! how little Minna thought of what Lady Fortrose was even then writing to tell her. It is very true that when one change takes place in a family, more changes almost always follow, even though they be in no way consequent on the first. And such was the case in the family of Lord Fortrose. One after another the three whose presence had most influenced the daily life at Pentyre, were withdrawn, all, though in quite different ways, precluded from any probability of resuming the life they had led there. And now, Pentyre was to loose not only its dearly loved guests, but its honoured Lord and Lady too.

Lord Fortrose had received the appointment of governor of ——, for which most responsible and exalted position he was eminently qualified, no less by his generous and popular manners, than by the talents, the conscientiousness, and the moderation for which he was justly distinguished. It was a trial to Lady Fortrose to leave her home with the prospect of five years' *exile*; but the fine climate, and the grand country

which she was called to inhabit, were strong inducements which helped to reconcile her to the change; but then came the thought of Minna, whom she had always secretly hoped to reclaim after this year: Minna had from her childhood the most enthusiastic desire to see the New World; and even were this not the case, Lady Fortrose could not bear the idea of placing the wide ocean for five whole years between herself and the child whose every grief she longed to hear and to soothe; Lord Fortrose agreed that some arrangement might surely be made—Mr. Raymond might go and live near his married daughter, or something; but Minna must come back; she would be such a help to her aunt in her new vice-regal duties, in which Winifred was too young to take any part; and it would be much better for Minna in every way.

Such was the subject of the letter that Minna received from her aunt. If the doubts that had assailed her before she decided to leave Pentyre were bewildering, what were her feelings now? It was not the wish to cross the great ocean, to see the other hemisphere that now recurred; it was not even the desire at once to return and be her aunt's child again, that made her almost determine to ask her father to let her go; but she could not bear the idea of the distance, both of time and space, that would divide her from those she loved best. While they were at Pentyre—while even she knew that they were in England, it seemed *possible*—she could *hope* to meet them; but with the ocean between them, and five years before they would recross it, how could she bear life patiently? the five years in anticipation looked like fifty. And Minna thought she should have grown old with care, and

longing, before she saw them again; her aunt, too, seemed to think she ought to go, and she owed her all the duty of love and gratitude. But when with the resolution nearly formed, Minna went to Bessie's room and looked at the pale fragile sister who loved her so much, and for whom all the love and tenderness she could bestow did not seem sufficient, she thought of the five years, and trembled; what change would five years bring to Bessie? and could she leave her unsupported by a sister's care?

It could not be. "Oh, that it had only been two years later, when Margaret would be coming home; but now I cannot do it." Minna wrote an answer, which Lady Fortrose read with deep concern, surprise, and disappointment. The letter was very sad, very deeply affectionate, but very decided; sometimes, indeed, Minna's words would flow on such a full tide of feeling, that it almost seemed as if she regretted her lot; but then followed the calm, though melancholy assurance of her conviction that that first great sacrifice was right, and that if she now shrank from its consequences, she would be disavowing its principles. Truly grieved, and yet constrained to admire the strength of character that had imposed such a life of trial on her darling, Lady Fortrose resolved to make no further effort to shake her purpose, but wrote a most tender, sorrowful reply, and entreated Minna to gain Mr. Raymond's consent, and spend a few days with her in London, where there was much business to transact before starting on her long voyage.

Mr. Raymond was not only quite willing to let Minna go, but took her to London himself, and then proceeded to pay Rhoda a visit at Naylehurst. Minna's

reception was such as to bring tears of joy and sorrow to her eyes; joy in the "love received and love returned," and sorrow to think of the long parting to which this meeting was only a prelude. Yet the delight, the overflowing happiness she felt in being with her aunt once more, soon banished all sadder thoughts; she felt younger that evening than she had done for months past, and her uncle's reproachful "Ah, Minna, you have not come to deserve my pardon, I am afraid," was met only by a loving smile; truly, he thought, she deserves almost anything earth could give her, for staying to cheer her father's home with that smile; but it had not shone so brightly there.

After one short happy week the day of parting came; Mr. Raymond returned to claim his daughter, and before she awoke on the following morning, in her little room at Guysbrooke, Lord Fortrose and his family were sailing down the Channel on board H.M.S. *Sultana*.

Now, for the first time, Minna realized her loneliness; they were all gone! there was not one of all those with whom her childhood had been passed, that was not now separated from her by the deep, dangerous, uncertain sea. Should she see them again? Oh, how much might happen before that time should come; if come it ever did. If they were safely guided through perils by sea and land, might she not herself be taken away, and alone, so alone, none of those best loved to receive her last farewell? With her aunt and all those who accompanied her, she had indeed exchanged solemn parting words, deeply impressed as were all the party with the uncertainty of the future meeting; but there was one friend even now in the midst of dangers, to

whom she had never said a word of parting even at leaving Pentyre, this was Hazelby; she had let him go away under the impression that they were to meet again as usual in a few months, when she knew such would probably not be the case, and she wished now he had known, or at least that the leave taken for so long a time, had been more consistent with the real friendship that had subsisted between them. She could not even hope to hear of him now, except by those terrible newspaper returns, where she dreaded to see his name; and worse than all this, Winifred had told her she fancied he had been much disappointed at having been allowed to leave Pentyre in ignorance of her intentions, when, as he afterwards discovered, not only Minna herself, but even Anne and Winifred were acquainted with them at the time; Lady Fortrose said nothing on the subject, and her silence confirmed Minna in the sorrowful idea, that this friendship, which had been a source of so much pleasure, was now at an end.

And was this, too, God's ordering? "Oh, yes," said Minna to herself; "I will blame no second causes, least of all the cause of so much sunny happiness to me; but God, and He only, knows the trial and its purpose, which is sure to be merciful. But it is a trial; days as they pass deepen it, and hope is at a loss; yes, I who lived by hope, and loved it so much, begin to think hope can die; earthly hope, I mean; oh, if there were not another and a more enduring hope, what should we do? Surely it is not wrong to call trials, trials; to feel them deeply; oh, no, it cannot be wrong, for if we do not feel them, they are of no use: we may mourn, we may cry to God in our sorrow,

only let our crying begin and end with His prayer, 'Thy will be done;' and there are worse trials; this might have been worse; and there are duties requiring our whole mind, not only the half spared from dwelling on our sorrows. Oh, for 'a heart at leisure from itself;' but when will that be gained?" Ah, Minna! that is gained in unselfish sorrow, and Margaret is gaining it even now!

It was exactly a week since the new Governor and his family had sailed for C——. A letter had reached Minna by a homeward-bound vessel, and she had rejoiced in good-tidings of the travellers, and now the Indian mail brought an explanation of Margaret's long silence—she had lost her husband! A few days before the departure of the last mail he was brought home to her, having been severely wounded in a disturbance on the frontiers where he was commanding. For three days she had watched him with hope and fear, having neither time nor spirit to write, and, in compliance with his dying wish, she had set out for England when all was over, and now wrote from Calcutta, where she had stayed for a few days' rest, before undertaking the long journey which was to bring her to her father's home—that home which for the future she hoped to share. This unexpected intelligence was received with very mingled feelings there; joy at the prospect of seeing his daughter again, and grief for her terrible loss, agitated Mr. Raymond's mind; but he soon fixed his thoughts on the happier future in store for him. Bessie, who could scarcely remember Colonel Maitland, or even Margaret, was yet deeply shocked and concerned at the blow which had fallen; and Minna thought she knew now how much worse trials

there were than her own; but as she sat thinking over Margaret's expected arrival, and Bessie spoke of the comfort and happiness of having her at home again, a thought suddenly crossed Minna's mind: "I might have gone!" Yes; if Margaret could have written by that last mail, or if even this letter had come one week sooner, Minna might have gone with her aunt, and need never have left her again. The thought was despair; so near, and yet so impossible! But Bessie must not know it; indeed it was too selfish to be acknowledged. And she put it from her; but still the fact was plain. Margaret would be at home, would be of far more value than she could ever be; and she would not be wanted. It was a strange confusion of circumstances, over which no human being had any control; and how far more strange is the infatuation that ascribes such things to chance!

This recollection was a comfort; evidently she was *not* to go, so there must be something else appointed for her to do; and she thought with pleasure of Margaret's children, and resolved to try and be to them what Margaret had once been to her. Now, too, she might fulfil her mother's desire, and find in Margaret the friend she had promised to seek; and indeed the time had come when Minna wanted a friend. She had borne her burden bravely, but the want of sympathy to which she had condemned herself added to its weight, and her strong heart sometimes almost failed. Certainly Margaret had more to bear, but she was much older; and cares, happy though they had hitherto been, had grown gradually around her, so that even this last dreadful blow had not come upon a wholly unprepared, unchastened spirit; but Minna's troubles and disap-

pointments had surprised her in the midst of life's first hopefulness, and she was only nineteen. No wonder her weary heart sometimes longed for rest in that of another; and now she quite regretted that three weeks must pass before Margaret could arrive.

A fortnight had passed away when Minna, on returning from a walk, was extremely surprised to find Mrs. Guysbrooke's card on the table.

"Why, Bessie," said she, "what could make Mrs. Guysbrooke call here now, as she has never done it before?"

"Has she called? I wish I had seen her. Did she bring that lovely little boy?"

"I don't know; I only found her card. But I wish she had not left it; I shall have to return the visit."

"Well," said Bessie, "then you will be rewarded by seeing the child."

"No, I daresay not. I should think she has a stiff-looking drawing-room, and never lets him come into it, for fear he should break the china ornaments."

"Oh, Minna!" said Bessie, laughing; "you are so dreadfully prejudiced against that poor woman. I think you are offended with her for not calling on us before."

"Oh, no; not if she never meant to call at all; but I do not quite like being taken up all on a sudden in this odd way. If we were not good enough before, as Hermione says, we are not good enough now."

"But there may be some other reason," said Bessie.

Yes, there was; and Mrs. Percival explained it. She had happened to mention in Mrs. Guysbrooke's presence the loss Mr. Raymond's family had sustained, and Mrs. Guysbrooke was attracted by the name of

Maitland. On further inquiry, she found that Colonel Maitland belonged to a family with whom she had long been intimate, though she had lost sight of him for many years, and did not know whom he had married. All her interest revived when she heard of his premature death, and she determined to cultivate the acquaintance of his widow, to which end she hastened to repair her neglect of the Miss Raymonds, as it would otherwise have been difficult to call on their sister.

In the course of the week Minna returned the visit, and her father accompanied her. The drawing-room in the red house was not as stiff and solitary as she had expected, for, besides Mrs. Guysbrooke, there was a gentleman, whom she introduced as "My son, Sir Antony." His manners were as easy and careless as hers were reserved and dignified; and though Minna wished the mother were not quite so alarming, she felt far more afraid of the son. Mrs. Guysbrooke looked as if nothing could make her laugh; and it seemed a harsh judgment to form in a minute, but Minna thought Sir Antony looked as if he would laugh at everything. She felt quite frightened, when, catching her eye directed to the window through which she saw the little boy in the garden, Sir Antony asked her if she was fond of children.

"Yes, very," said Minna.

He rose, and opened the window, and called to the child.

"Come here, Clarence; I want you."

The little boy immediately trotted across the gravel-road, and stood under the window, looking up at his father, who leaned over and lifted him in, for the windows, as in most old houses, were nearly three feet

from the ground. Sir Antony then introduced his son to Minna, and bade him go and speak to Mr. Raymond. After which, Mrs. Guysbrooke would have sent him out again, but Sir Antony took him on his knee, and kept him there till Mr. Raymond and Minna rose to go, when he accompanied them to the outer gate, carrying Clarence on his shoulder; and Minna, as she looked at the little happy face, felt inclined to reverse her judgment of Sir Antony, to whom she had taken rather a dislike. Bessie was eager to hear the result of the visit, and pleased to find that Minna had really made acquaintance with little Clarence.

"And I am so glad he is not dreadfully shy. I hope you admire him now as much I do, Minna."

"Yes; he is really a lovely child; his hair, though so very light, has a golden tint that saves it from being flaxen, and his eyes are so beautifully clear and blue; all his features, too, are so good, and it is the loveliest expression; but he is so unlike his father. I should think his mother must have been very pretty."

"But I believe Sir Antony is considered very handsome."

"Is he? Ah! I dare say he is; but I did not find it out. I cannot bear his expression. He looks very good-natured; but he also looks very disagreeable."

"I can hardly imagine how he combines the two, or how any one can."

"Wait, then, till you see Sir Antony, and then I think you will understand what I mean."

Bessie had not long to wait, for on the following morning little Clarence appeared with his father at the gate, when Minna drove Bessie out as usual in her little pony-carriage. Sir Antony came forward and shook

hands with Minna, who introduced him to her sister; and, after a smiling recognition from the little boy, Minna drove on rather hastily.

"Now, that is what I dislike," said she, energetically, as soon as they were out of hearing. "I do hope Sir Antony will soon go away again; if we are never to go outside the gate without meeting him, it will be quite unbearable."

"I don't see anything bad in his countenance, though."

"Don't you see he looks as if we must be glad to see him."

"Perhaps he thinks so."

"Very likely; but I never like a person who looks so on first acquaintance. It is both conceited and impertinent. I wish Clarence was not his child; he is such a darling."

"I am glad we may know him now," said Bessie; "because he is just the age of Margaret's little Flora; and I dare say, poor little thing, he will be glad to have her for a companion."

"Oh, yes; it is pleasant to know him, and Mrs. Guysbrooke, too; and if only Sir Antony will go away again, we shall be very neighbourly and comfortable, I dare say."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

I know a heart that is tranquil, speaking praises and thanks alway,
From the rise of the rosy morning till the soft-tinted close of day,
And it does little deeds of kindness, with such soul-cheering happiness,
You would think that by hearsay only it knew of the world's distress;
And, save when the jarring heart-string is touched by a heedless word,
You never would dream that sorrow had broken a single chord.

HOOD.

Love is never lost, though hearts run waste,
And sorrow makes the chastened heart a seer.

GERALD MASSEY.

MARGARET came at last with her three children and an Indian ayah, who created as much astonishment in the village as if she had been a real lion, and became the representative, to many juvenile unbelievers, of all the black people they had hitherto regarded more or less as creations of the missionary brain. "Her's Mrs. Maitland's black nurse, to the Lodge," was the frequent remark, uttered in a loud wondering whisper, as the tall, dark woman marched by in her white drapery, with the fair children, whose skin and colouring formed such a contrast to her own. Gordon, the eldest, was four years old, tall, very active, and with the fair hair and changeable colour peculiar to some Scotch com-

plexions; and his baby brother, Ronald, promised to resemble him. But Flora, Gordon's junior by one year, was very different; she had her mother's dark hair and brown eyes—very large striking eyes they were, so full of life and fun; she was mirth and mischief exemplified, and Gordon was her able assistant in both pursuits. Margaret was less altered than either of her sisters by the five years that had passed since they met; but more mature womanhood had softened and improved her both in features and expression, and sorrow added gentleness to her tones and tenderness to her manner; at the first glance, and the first sound of her voice, Minna's heart went back to early days, and she felt that she had still a comforter and a friend.

It was with touchingly chastened joy that Margaret found herself again in her father's home, changed as it was now; but "the mourned, the loved, the lost," so present to the mind in those first days of her return, would have been satisfied to know her there, and she had found, too, more than she thought to find. Two letters having missed her on her journey, she had fancied Minna gone with Lord Fortrose, of whose appointment the newspapers had informed her. Some time passed before she happened to allude to this mistake; but one day, after warmly thanking her for some little attention to the children, to whose happiness Minna soon became almost indispensable—

"I have never told you," said she, "how surprised and gratified I was to find you here, my dear Minna; but how was it, darling? I thought Honoria would never bear to leave England without you."

Margaret looked up in her face for the answer, and Minna said, "She did want me to go."

"And you did not wish it, dear?" said Margaret, noticing the change in Minna's tone, and speaking very gently.

Minna tried to answer, but that gentleness unnerved her.

Margaret saw the quivering of her lips, and went on: "There is some sorrow, then; something I have not heard; I never quite understood your first leaving; my darling child, have you been unhappy?"

"Oh, no! I will tell you all; oh! how I have longed to let it all out. I know I am selfish, and my sorrows are nothing to yours; but I have had to bear them all alone, and I am so very tired;" and Minna really gave way at last, and cried like a weary child, with her head on her sister's shoulder. Gradually she calmed herself, and poured out her sorrows to that sympathizing ear; Margaret pitied her, and admired her more and more as the narration proceeded, and her murmured "poor child," from time to time, did Minna's heart good, it put her so in mind of Lady Fortrose. Some part of her troubles were passed lightly, to be talked over more fully another time; but when Minna had tearfully described her last parting with her aunt, and said, "And your letter came the next week," Margaret added, "And then you felt you might have gone," Minna hid her tears with her hands and murmured, "It was so selfish of me."

"No, dear; so natural. You did not know me, and you had the best reasons to know and love Honoria; you know, too, that it was a trial to her to leave you, and I honour you more than I can say for the way you have borne all your heavy troubles."

"Heavy? Oh, Margaret, after yours."

"Yes, darling; they were heavy enough for your young spirit, which has learned so soon to long for rest."

"Oh! I have, I have longed for it; but now I have told you, I think it is found."

"But, Minna, did not the beautiful text, 'There remaineth a rest for the people of God,' often comfort you in your weary days?"

"Oh, yes; and then I tried not to wish for rest on earth; but it is God who gives us rest in friends such as you, so it is not wrong to feel it."

"No; and I think He sometimes withholds from us that sort of comfort to make us trust more in Him alone, and then restores it to make us love and thank Him more than ever."

"But He does not always restore it," said Minna, looking sadly and fondly at her sister.

"No, not here; when we are strong enough to bear a long loneliness; but you know, darling, I shall go to him, though he shall not return to me;" and though Margaret's tears were falling fast, she went on, "That is the hope in whose light I live now, and I cannot be impatient when I have these, his darlings;" and she looked at little Flora, who had run in to prefer some childish request, and now stood leaning against her mother's knee. Margaret kissed the dark curls, and granted the petition, and with a loving kiss of thanks, the child darted away to rejoin her brother.

"How you must love them," said Minna.

"Oh!" said Margaret, "when you were Flora's age, I thought I loved you as only a mother generally loves; but I find even that was different; our mother's *love* for you was more unselfish, for she spared you

for your own sake, when I would have kept you for mine."

"Oh, but, Margaret, *never* give Flora away; at any cost, at any risk, keep her in your own home, in her right place."

Minna said this so earnestly, that Margaret turned an anxious look upon her, and said—

"Then the sorrow has been even greater than the happiness? And yet at home you would have had trials, and less happiness to balance them."

"Less to leave," said Minna, "and less to doubt; trials by poverty, or sickness, or sorrow, are deep and hard to bear, I know; but, Margaret, I have had a trial which even you, perhaps, have not known, and from which I would carefully shield any child of mine —I mean the trial of doubting; of choosing who to follow, who to obey, and who and what to resign; whether to keep happiness, and forego the right to it, or to give it up, and seem ungrateful for it. This sort of responsibility may, I know, fall to the lot of any girl who is an orphan or alone in the world, but then she would probably have to determine only the line of life in which to obtain a livelihood and a home, or if she lost what had been both, it would be none of her own doing, she would only have to submit to the will of God; but to doubt His will, to be one's own judge, try one's own cause, and pronounce a verdict against one's own happiness, is a peculiar and a very painful thing to do; and no one knows how deep it wears into the heart, or how long it feels sore. I think it is almost too great a strain on a young mind—at least it has made mine years older; so don't let Flora have to bear it—not both your children," she added

with a tearful smile, having spoken all the time in a sad, quiet tone, as if all she referred to had long gone by, but had, as she said, left too deep a mark to be easily effaced or healed over.

Margaret was much affected by the evident intensity of suffering hitherto so silently borne; she did not speak immediately, and Minna added, in a low, earnest tone—

"But, Margaret, you will never let my father know this; I was very happy, and I have always told him so; he need not see the other side of the picture."

"No, dear, he need never see it; I wish it had never been; I have not known a trial like yours; and if I had, I fear I might not have come out of it as honestly and bravely as you did. God grant Flora may never be so tried; but, Minna, you are still very young, though you say you feel so old; and I shall hope yet to give you back to Honoria some day, or at least, if you think her home cannot be again yours, five years will soon pass away, and Pentyre will be open to you whenever you like to go there, I am sure."

"Ah! but much may happen in five years. Even in this one year, you see, my aunt has lost three of us; first I left her, then Beatrice, and then Hazelby."

"Why, what has become of him?"

"Oh! did you not know he is in the Crimea?"

"What, in the army?"

"Yes, the—Guards."

"You liked him?"

"Yes; we were friends, but I never wished him good-bye. He left Pentyre before I did, and I never saw him again, and he was angry at my not telling him."

"How do you know?"

"Winifred told me."

"Perhaps she made a mistake; if not, he did."

"How do you mean?"

"He ought not to be angry because you did not tell him before you told your aunt; it would have been wrong, and he had no claim upon you."

"No; but I suppose he thought I did not care."

"But he had known you long enough to be aware that you did care for Pentyre, and all that belonged to it; so, if he was vexed or hurt at your not taking leave of him, as of the others, he ought to look upon it as a thing you could not help; he may be sorry, certainly, but not angry. I should think, by what you have said, that is hardly like his character. I dare say you are sorry too."

"Very sorry; and now, especially, that he is gone to the war; and I can't bear him to think me unfeeling or ungrateful; he was always so very kind to me, and I am so very fond of Anne; and I know it would vex her to think we were not friends."

"Well, I hope this will all come right, too; the war cannot last for ever, and when peace comes to the nations, may it come to you, too, dear; and, in the meantime, Minna dear, hope; that is your pleasant duty, I am sure, and, like all others, it becomes easier with practice; and how true it is that 'a man should both hope and quietly wait.'"

After this conversation, Minna felt strengthened to bear her part with a more cheerful mind in the daily life of her home. She was very useful to Margaret as an assistant with the children, for Gordon and Flora were both very forward, and not fit to be entirely left to servants. The acquaintance with little Clarence

was made, and he was delighted at having for the first time companions of his own age. Mrs. Guysbrooke was particularly kind to Margaret's children, and it often fell to Minna's lot to accompany them to the red house for games of play with Clarence. But this was less pleasant for her than for the children, as her dislike of Sir Antony had rather increased, and he was now almost always at his mother's house. Happily, however, for Minna, he went away in November, to spend the hunting season in Gloucestershire. He might have, in some degree, become aware of the estimation in which she held him, had he noticed the careful weighing of her words when he said—

"I am sorry to say this is the last time I shall have the pleasure of seeing you for some weeks, for I am going to Cirencester for hunting."

"Oh! are you?" said Minna, trying not to show how glad she was.

"And Clarence is going away, too, next week," added Sir Antony.

"Is he? I am so sorry," said Minna, warmly.

She was very sorry to part with the dear little child; for to her natural love of children was added, in his case, pity for the gentle little creature so early deprived of a mother's care. Mrs. Guysbrooke was fond of him, and very careful of him, but she was unable to show him the fondling and caressing love which seemed peculiarly suited to his sensitive and affectionate disposition. Minna's warm manner had quite won his heart and confidence, and she was even more fond of Clarence than of her own sister's children; they had always been used to such love and gentleness, and therefore did not value, as Clarence did, the unusual

charm of Minna's manner, and his grateful affection was shown in the most winning ways. She was glad to find that her little favourite was only to be absent for three weeks, and she heartily hoped his father's absence was to be indefinitely prolonged.

About this time, Hermione Percival returned from a visit to her aunt, and soon presented herself at the Lodge to beg Minna's company in a walk. Hermione talked a great deal of the pleasure she had had during her visit, but deplored the dulness and gloom that had fallen on society in consequence of the dread of bad accounts from the seat of war.

"Almost everybody," said she, "has some friend or relations there, and I felt for the first time glad that papa had left the army."

"Yes, you must indeed feel thankful; but you know many clergymen have gone out."

"Oh! but papa is not going; there is no fear; but people really think nothing now of going out just to see their friends. I met a gentleman the other day, at the Bampfyldes', who told me he had a friend out there, and he meant to go and see him as soon as the winter was over."

"Well, that is being a friend indeed. Who was the gentleman?"

"Mr. Greville; but I do not know who the friend is. I was rather curious; but as he did not say, I did not like to ask; and, to tell you the truth, I was thinking how nice it must be to have a great friend, like Mr. Greville; for he is a very delightful person. I wish you knew him."

"I think I do," said Minna. "Is his Christian name Edward?"

"I don't know; I never heard his name; but you can easily find him out, and renew your acquaintance, if you like, for he is coming to stay at Sandsclyst House, and, of course, you have been asked to the birthday party there on the 9th."

"Yes; but I did not think I should go, as Margaret has declined it for Gordon, whom I was to have taken."

"But your brother?" said Hermione.

"Yes, Margaret thinks I ought to go, as the Sands have been so kind to Frank; but he never goes to balls himself."

"No; but this will not be a ball, only an evening party."

"Much the same, in fact, you know, it will be."

"But do go, whether he does or not. Mamma means to ask you to go with us, and I am quite bent upon it."

"Mrs. Percival is very kind, and going with you would be very pleasant, but——"

"Now, no more 'buts.' I shall ask Mrs. Maitland to make you go, and then you will be very much obliged to her for deciding."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FRIEND INDEED.

Oh! to call back the days that are not,
Mine eyes were blinded, your words were few;
Dost thou know the truth, now up in heaven,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true!

'Oh, that wretched ball!"

Thus did Minna afterwards characterize the party at Sandsclyst.

Margaret thought the change would be good for Minna, who also herself was the less averse to going, as the prospect of seeing a face she had known at Pentyre was a singularly attractive one, and she hoped Mr. Greville might tell her something of this friend of his, for whom she was at no loss to find a name.

Accordingly she set out with Mrs. Percival and Hermione, early in the afternoon of the ninth of November, for Sandsclyst, which was, as has been before stated, about five miles from Guysbrooke.

The drive was a pleasant one. Minna always enjoyed being with Mrs. Percival, whose kind and natural manner, and real good sense, more than compensated for her want of the cleverness that Hermione valued so highly.

Just as the carriage came in sight of Sandsclyst village, they met a gentleman on horseback, who, on recognising the carriage, stopped it, and, riding up to the window, said, without further preface—

"Oh, Mrs. Percival, have you heard the news from the war?"

"No; is there any?"

"Yes, and glorious, too; another tremendous battle, and we seem to have given the Russians another sharp lesson, but there are no particulars yet; I'm afraid our loss is heavy though; they say the —— Guards are almost cut to pieces."

A few expressions of horror and pity were exchanged, and the carriage drove on, Minna utterly blind and deaf to all but that one horrible statement: for the —— Guards was Hazelby's regiment.

Oh, the blessing of gathering darkness on a winter afternoon! One could not see the other's face, and Mrs. Percival went on talking from time to time, in short sentences expressive of sorrow for the slain and sympathy for the sorrowing.

And Hermione thanked God in her heart this time that her father was not a soldier, and then wondered what was the fate of Mr. Greville's friend.

And Minna sat in miserable endurance, and feared too much to hazard a hope.

And then the carriage stopped at Sandsclyst House, and bright lights were in the hall, but in the drawing-room the flickering fire-light's hospitable glow shed a favourable doubt on the colour of faces in the room. In one timid glance around Minna, failed to discover Mr. Greville, and she went to her room expecting and dreading to meet him at dinner.

Oh, the relief of being alone, and the agony of the coming gaiety! She could make no excuse—she must appear easy and unconcerned. Oh that he had been a near relation, that conventional propriety might have

given her a right to decline appearing; but what could she plead?—nothing! There was no help, she must go down and act her part. But she might and she did pray—that he might be comforted, cared for, and saved, if it were well for him—if there was yet time—if he lay among the wounded and dying. She scarcely dared to pray for his life, so she asked for grace for him and for herself to say, "Thy will be done." And this was Minna's preparation for a ball! Mr. Greville did not appear. He had gone to London on the first receipt of the intelligence; perhaps to ascertain how much was true; perhaps, thought Minna, to go out and nurse the friend he loved so much, if he found his friendship might yet avail.

Hermione lamented his absence, and never doubted that it was caused by concern for his friend, in whose welfare she began to feel much interested, and blamed herself for not having found out his name.

Minna had lost none of her beauty, though her extreme paleness might have impaired it; but she was much admired, and had many partners, most of whom talked of the war, and thought Miss Raymond either very shy or very proud. She exerted herself, however, to find other subjects of conversation, and tried to laugh in the right place, and not say "no" when "yes" should be said. But it was weary work—misery it really was. Minna did not sleep that morning, tired and excited as she was; and she went down to breakfast looking pale and haggard.

The post brought a letter from Mr. Greville, part of which Mrs. Sands read aloud to her guests, as it concerned the war. He wrote thus—

"The report about the —— Guards was incorrect;

it was not the ——, but the Grenadiers, that suffered so severely; and though the —— were engaged, I trust their loss may be but slight."

As none of the party except Minna happened to have friends in either of the two regiments, the correction of the mistake was of no great importance, as they were equally concerned for the gallant sufferers under whatever name; but the reaction of intense relief was almost too much for Minna to bear, and she turned so pale that Mrs. Percival thought she was fainting, and was relieved to see the flush that followed, heightened as it was by the effort to suppress her tears.

Mrs. Percival brought the instinct of a kind woman's heart to bear on the circumstance, and came to the conclusion that Minna had a friend in the Crimea, and probably in the Grenadier Guards, so she pitied her, and did her best to shield her from observation, besides resisting Mrs. Sands' entreaties that they would stay to luncheon, and ordering the carriage to take them home an hour earlier than she had intended. .

Poor Minna told Margaret what had happened. Margaret had heard of the battle, but no further report had reached her. She was very sorry for Minna, and regretted having persuaded her to go to Sandsclyst. As the days passed on, however, suspense gave place to hope, and Minna assured herself, over and over again, that she must have heard—some report must have reached her—if he were .... She dared not put the dreadful thought into words.

She busied herself again kindly and cheerfully with Bessie and the children; and there was nothing in her manner that betrayed the hungry, fearful hope of news, which formed the under-current of every feeling.

A letter from Anne would have been an unspeakable comfort, but Anne was in Madeira, and could have heard no more than Minna as yet; and even the letters from C——, being silent on the absorbing theme, lost half their interest.

Clarence and his grandmother came back at last, and Minna took Flora and Gordon to the red house again. She found Mrs. Guysbrooke looking anxious and worn; and all her sympathy was aroused when she discovered the reason.

"They say," said Mrs. Guysbrooke, "that those terrible lists will be out to-day."

"Will they?" said Minna, almost breathless.

"Yes, but we shall not have them," said Mrs. Guysbrooke, sadly. "The newspapers will not even be at E—— till the evening, you know; and there is no post so late."

Minna suddenly remembered hearing of the two younger sons who were in the army, and she felt for the mother's distress.

"My brother is gone to E——," she said, "and I think he will certainly bring us a newspaper, if he can get one; and if he does, I will take care to send it to you."

Mrs. Guysbrooke thanked her earnestly; and Minna was touched by seeing the tears in the eyes of that usually reserved, stately woman. She was almost angry with herself for having ever thought Mrs. Guysbrooke cold; and when, at parting, the old lady actually kissed her, having felt, perhaps, that there was a fellowship of anxiety between them, Minna had great difficulty in restraining her own tears.

Yet Mrs. Guysbrooke's manner had been more stern

than usual to Clarence, and he seemed half frightened at her. His unconsciousness seemed to add an impatient bitterness to her anxiety; and as he clung to Minna, she ventured to ask if she might take him home with her, and let him have his tea with Margaret's children.

Mrs. Guysbrooke readily consented, and Minna carried off her little favourite in triumph, with the understanding that his nurse should fetch him at seven o'clock.

Frank did not come, however. There was no news, so he rode straight home to Sandsclyst.

Minna sent a little note to Mrs. Guysbrooke to tell her of this disappointment, but Mrs. Guysbrooke was put out of suspense sooner than she expected. The next morning's post brought her a letter announcing the death of her youngest son, who was killed by a cannon-shot as he advanced bearing the regimental colours.

Minna did not hear this sad news till the afternoon, when Clarence came with his nurse, and the latter said that Mrs. Guysbrooke wished Miss Raymond to know what had happened.

Poor little Clarence knew his grandmother was in trouble, but could scarcely remember his uncle; he was, however, so much distressed on hearing the cause of grief, that his nurse had brought him in the hope that a game of play with the other children would cheer him up.

At last Minna's turn came. The next day brought the newspaper that so many feared to look into; she seized it, and was in the act of opening it, when Margaret entered, and guessing the possible contents,

took it gently from her. Minna sat down on the sofa, and looked at her imploringly.

Margaret hastily glanced over the dreadful list, and her face brightened. "Not dead!" thought Minna. Another moment, Margaret laid the paper down, and was at Minna's side.

"What is it?"

"He is wounded, dear."

"But not dead, not dying, Margaret?" And she seemed to pierce her sister's thought with her eyes.

"No; I am not deceiving you," said Margaret, very quietly, holding Minna firmly round the waist, "he is only wounded—but badly, I fear."

"Why, what is said? I may see it now."

"Yes; if you will still try and hope, my darling;" and Minna snatched the paper and read, "Lieutenant and Captain Lord Hazelby severely wounded." A few tears fell very slowly, and then, "Poor Anne!" said Minna, "how wretched she will be; I hope she will see it in something more kind than a newspaper."

"Probably they will have a letter."

"Ah! like poor Mrs. Guysbrooke," said Minna, her tears flowing freely at the thought of her fellow-sufferers.

"Will you write to Anne?" said Margaret, glad to find Minna so soothing an occupation; "I should think it might be a comfort to her to hear from you."

"Yes, I will write; and then perhaps I shall hear ——."

"Yes; she will surely send you the next account she gets, and you must not be too fearful, dearest."

"I am afraid 'severely' is very bad," said Minna, in a trembling voice.

"But it is not dangerously," said Margaret.

"No; not when that was written."

Margaret knew what she meant, and had her own fears, but she said no more. Where is the use of anticipating evil?

"Oh!" thought Minna, when she was left alone, "that I had told him, that I might never have disappointed him, that I might have heard him say one word of sorrow when we parted—only one word! But how little I thought then what was to happen. But it does not matter to him now, that is a comfort; he does not care; if it vexed him once, it is all over now, and I dare say he soon forgot it in the new life he has led since. But if I could only hear of him! His forgetting can't make me forget."

And now she began to think about the next accounts, how long before she could hear any, and then what they might be. This suspense would be far worse than the former patience; "patience!—if there be but one lesson for me in life, surely it is that; and as to hope, I will hope, if I can, but all I hope for goes the other way, I think, now.

"How can I hear? Who will know? Lady Elizabeth is the only one in England of his near relations; and she—— oh! I wish I had ever liked her, or taken pains to make her like me. Beatrice must hear quickly at Paris, but she probably will quite forget that I want to know, and I must wait and wait, and long wearily for the news I dread to hear."

But Minna was not quite forgotten. After many weeks of patience and prayer, during which her outward cheerfulness astonished Margaret, she was rewarded by a letter from Beatrice. She wrote, she

said, because she was sure Minna must have been grieved to see Hazelby's name in that sad list, but she could now tell her better news of him. It was true he had been severely wounded, but his recovery was more favourable than the surgeons had anticipated, and he was to join his sister in Paris almost immediately. Lord Ralegh was already gone to Marseilles to meet him, and would have gone to him sooner but for Mr. Greville, who had passed through Paris some weeks before, on his way to Scutari to nurse his friend.

Minna blessed Mr. Greville in her heart, and thought what qualities must those be that could secure such friendship.

This letter was to Minna like the rainbow on the dark cloud, but only in the returning brightness of her smile did Margaret and Bessie realize its long absence, so carefully had the usual contented manner been maintained.

A letter from Anne soon followed. She had evidently been in great distress about her brother, but had, like Minna, been relieved by the accounts since received. She lamented being obliged to remain in Madeira, but said that her own health was now considered to require the mild climate, and that therefore it was resolved, as much on her account as on her father's, not to leave the island until the spring should have fairly set in.

Minna was grieved to hear this. She knew that there had been some uneasiness about Anne's health last winter, but having heard nothing since, she had fancied the cause of apprehension entirely removed, and Anne never adverted to her own ailments. But this necessity for a warm climate augured something

serious, and turned Minna's anxiety into a new channel.

She told her fears on this subject to Bessie, who was very sorry, for between her and Anne, though they had never met, there had sprung up a sort of sympathy, arising from the similarity of their circumstances, both being almost entirely prevented from joining in the pursuits and amusements common to their age, both loving and admiring Minna, and each deeply interested in what Captain Raymond had told her of the other; so it had been an innocent little castle in the air of Anne's mind, that she should some day know Bessie, and Bessie often regretted that she had no prospect of becoming acquainted with Anne.

CHAPTER XXV.

SKETCHES FROM NATURE.

Alas! our memories may retrace
Each circumstance of time and place,
Season and scene come back again,
And outward things unchanged remain;
The rest we cannot reinstate,
Ourselves we cannot recreate,
Nor set our souls to the same key
Of the remembered harmony.

ARNOLD.

CHRISTMAS came and went.

Every one knows how sad a Christmas that was to many homes. To Minna it did not seem like Christmas at all, though when she saw Gordon and Flora admiring the holly-boughs with which their nursery was decorated, she could not help thinking of last Christmas-eve, when a merry party at Pentyre were arranging evergreens in the hall. Hazelby, Anne, Beatrice, and herself were there, as well as the Maxwells, and now which of them remembered it?

Margaret determined that her little ones should have some bright remembrances to connect with their first Christmas in England, and Gordon was full of awe and admiration when he accompanied his mother for the first time to church, and saw the tall white pillars tastefully wreathed with ivy and holly procured chiefly from Guysbrooke Park.

On returning home, he found Flora and Clarence waiting for him, and aunt Minna ready to preside at the tea-table, where a large cake, ornamented with a sprig of holly, formed the centre of attraction.

Clarence was now become more than ever the companion of the little Maitlands, for his presence seemed to trouble his grandmother, and Sir Antony, who had returned to spend Christmas with her, was always glad to let him benefit by Mrs. Maitland's general invitation.

The bright happy little faces chased away Minna's sad forebodings more effectually than any other consolation, and she really enjoyed the tea-party, and went down to dinner afterwards with a smiling face, which made her father observe pleasantly, that he was glad she did not look as if she regretted other Christmas parties.

"By the way," he added, "I dare say they are having a cold Christmas in Canada; when did you hear last?"

"This very day, papa. My aunt said the cold weather was beginning already, and they expect a very severe winter; but it seems to agree with them all."

"Ah, then they need not mind it; but I'm afraid a hard winter will come very hard on our poor Crimeans."

Margaret here interposed, and prevented a discussion about the war, which she felt would only chase Minna's smiles away, and by tacit agreement more cheerful subjects were introduced, till Mr. Raymond said,—

"Poor Mrs. Guysbrooke, she has a sad Christmas, indeed; but I am glad Sir Antony is come back.

I wonder he does not persuade her to go away for a change."

"He has tried, but in vain," said Margaret. "He told me yesterday that he had done his utmost to persuade her to move even to the park, if she would go no further, but she cannot bear leaving her own house."

"It is a pity he does not go and live at the park, and take the child, too, I think," said Mr. Raymond. "Mrs. Guysbrooke evidently feels the charge too much for her; and so it is at her age."

"But he is such a nice child," said Minna, "and so easy to manage; I should not think he could give much trouble."

"No; it is not that," said Margaret; "but I agree with papa that, at Mrs. Guysbrooke's age, the very idea of responsibility of that sort may be a trouble, and I dare say we shall find that this blow has been a great shock to her. I should think her stern nature may find it harder to endure than some whom God has made more flexible."

All the party thought of Margaret's own trial, and there was silence. She paused a moment, and then added, looking at Minna—

"But what is there that we cannot bear with God's help?"

As they left the room she put her arm round Minna, and whispered—

"Don't wonder at my strength, dear, but remember where it comes from. There is no truer word in the Bible than that most comforting promise—'As thy days so shall thy strength be.'"

"I know it," said Minna; "nothing else would do."

As they were about to enter the drawing-room, Margaret thought she heard a sound of crying upstairs, and ran up to learn the cause. The sound seemed to come from her bedroom, where Gordon also slept, and on entering she found him sobbing in his little bed.

She put down her candle, and leaned over the child.

"What is the matter, my darling. Have you not had a happy day?"

"Yes," sobbed the little boy.

"Then why are you crying, dear, if you are happy?"

"That's it," was the answer; "it was such a happy day, and it is gone!"

A little summary of Margaret's married life!

Such a happy day, and it is gone!

She felt the coincidence, but she learned the lesson too. How do we sometimes childishly mourn over happy days that are gone, instead of lying still in our Father's arms, trusting him to give us rest, and to provide for the morrow.

Other tears than Gordon's fell on his pillow, while his mother strove to lead him to change his regrets into thankfulness, and to trust that God, who had given him so much to make him happy, and the power to enjoy it, could and would still care lovingly for a little thankful child.

Gordon was happy again before she left his little bed, and Margaret told Minna the lesson she had learned there.

To which of the sisters was it most applicable?

Perhaps to Minna, in its primary sense, for her happy day, like Gordon's, might return; many a merry Christmas might still be his, and her life might

again be full of brightness; but Margaret's one happy day was indeed gone irrevocably!

Months passed away, and Minna heard no more of Anne or her brother.

At length, however, her desire for information about him was in some degree gratified, by reading in the newspaper an approving notice of the fact that he had returned to his duties in the Crimea.

The birth of Beatrice's first child about this time gave her an excuse for not writing; but Anne's silence caused great uneasiness to Minna.

Not till June did she get a letter from her; and this time she wrote from Italy. No chance of coming to England; the doctors would not hear of it, and had condemned her to return to Madeira for the winter; but the two next months were to be spent in the south of France. Hazelby had returned to the Crimea the moment his strength seemed sufficiently restored, but was still far from well.

There was nothing very cheering in such a letter, and Minna could not help casting many a longing thought to the sunny south, where Anne would so gladly have greeted her. Madeira seemed unattainable; but France seemed so near, and yet it was equally unattainable.

When what has formed the great interest of life is put out of our sight, and yet not beyond the hope of restoration, it is very difficult to fill its place by creating temporary interests for the purpose. We may find duties, and do them faithfully and well, but give our heart and mind to them, we perhaps cannot; and Minna now experienced this difficulty.

Before Margaret came home, the feeling of being

necessary both to Bessie and her father sufficiently filled her mind to make regrets both for the past and hopes for the future take a secondary place; but now it was very different, and there was a want of interest in daily life creating a blank in Minna's heart.

She began to get into a dangerous habit of living in the past and in the future more than in the present.

The constant train of thought thus engendered, though pleasant in itself, made her silent and abstracted, and though always cheerful, she seemed to lose her energy.

Margaret was conscious of the gradual change; and, anxious to assist her, and give her some fresh interest, she promoted her intercourse with Miss Percival, and begged Minna to take up her music again, as Hermione excelled in it.

Music came back almost as a novelty to Minna; she had quite neglected it of late, at least instrumentally, though she would sit and sing for hours alone, sometimes in the garden, sometimes at work in her room, but then she only sang old favourites, such as were suggested by the train of thought or memory in which she was indulging; but now she roused herself at Margaret's request to practise some duets with Hermione; and her genuine love of music soon recalled to the mind of her companion the hidden enthusiasm that she had once seen awakened by the sight of the sea. But Hermione did not now express her surprise; she fancied that Minna had a history belonging to her, and hoped to improve her friendship, and learn her story, for Minna had never mentioned having been an adopted child.

The long summer days gave the two friends plenty

of time for their musical studies, which were generally carried on at the Rectory; and when Margaret saw Minna eager to make and keep these appointments, she was very glad.

Hermione was a far more cultivated companion than Minna had supposed; her taste for poetry and music was combined with a decided talent for drawing, in which she far excelled Minna, who was very glad to take hints from her; and they soon varied their studies by going out sketching together, though, as Hermione had formerly observed, there was very little worth sketching about Guysbrooke. One day, however, they went to try and take a view of Guysbrooke House, which was old, irregular, and picturesque, though, like most Devonshire houses, deficient in architectural beauty.

While they were drawing, the conversation naturally turned on the house and its owners, past and present.

"I wonder," said Hermione, "Sir Antony does not get over his prejudice, and go and live there."

"Prejudice!—what prejudice?"

"Why, you know he was just going there when his wife died, and so he has never gone."

"Oh, but I daresay it is no prejudice; but what does he want of that great house with only Clarence? And, besides, he lives with his grandmother."

"But Sir Antony will marry again, I should think."

"Then I suppose he will live there; only I do hope he will marry a nice person, for if she were not kind to Clarence, how dreadful it would be."

"You are thinking of the general prejudice against stepmothers; do you forget that I have one?"

"That would be the best proof that I do not share

the prejudice. I did forget for the moment, but you were never in the same danger as Clarence. Mr. Percival would never have married a person who was not religious."

"And do you think Sir Antony would?"

"I don't know; but I do not think he cares for those things himself."

"Ay, but he might like his wife to care."

"And do you think if she really did care she would marry him? Even if she could like him, could she trust him?"

"But they say women are always more religious than men. It is their nature, because they require something to lean upon; that is often the reason they marry foolishly."

"But if they want some one to lean upon, how much better to choose religion, which *can* support them, than a husband who *cannot*, as he certainly cannot without the strength of religion to help him. I will tell you a little allegory about that, as I know you like allegories, or rather I will read it to you."

Minna took a little note-book from her pocket, and read as follows:—

"I saw a piece of ivy growing in a fair clustering form, but having for its only support a single blade of grass. The ivy was full, and bright with hope, and constant, and confiding; for, when I tried to withdraw it from its frail prop, it seemed to cling to the bending stalk by numberless tendrils firmly and closely wound round it. The ivy will grow higher—older; and as it ascends towards the topmost point of the blade of grass, it will find its stay wavering, bending, helpless? Ah! more helpless than the ivy itself, for

the ivy can seek and find a stronger prop; but the grass stands and falls, unconscious of weakness, and not seeking strength.

"Oh, why did the ivy ally itself to a companion it could not trust! The grass looked straight, and fine, and tall; but had the ivy looked up before she clung, she would have seen that the grass did not look up, but its head was feebly bent towards the earth.

"Oh, let the ivy always look up if it would not risk a fall!"

"How pretty—how very pretty," said Hermione; "and how well the simile is borne out. Only, is it quite natural? does ivy ever twine round grass like that?"

"Yes; I never saw it but once, and then it really was so."

"It certainly applies wonderfully to what we were saying. Where did you find it?"

"The ivy? I saw it in Wales."

"No; but the allegory!"

"O!" said Minna, "I saw it, and it struck me, so I wrote the description."

"What! you wrote all that yourself?"

"Yes."

"You must have a great deal of imagination."

"Not much is required to make a sketch from nature like that," said Minna, smiling.

"Did you make any other sketches in Wales? I mean real drawing sketches."

"No; I never was clever at sketching; but I often wish now that I had tried it."

"You will next time you go, I suppose."

"Next time," said Minna, slowly and rather sadly,

"perhaps I shall. But after all, I think I had rather learn to take likenesses; how delightful that would be."

"Yes, very; but then it is so difficult to satisfy one's-self, or anybody else. Have you ever tried to take one of little Clarence?"

"No; but I mean to try what a pretty picture he would make, and he would be easier than most children; he would sit so still."

"Yes, for you. He is so fond of you, and I sometimes wonder whether you don't care even more for him than for your own little niece and nephews."

"Why, you see, fond as I am of them, there is another feeling about little Clarence. I am so sorry for him. I know they will always be well cared for, but he, poor little thing, may have such a different life, and even now there is a sort of pleading, half sad look on his face sometimes, that makes him more winning than any other child I ever saw; and he is so gentle, and pure, and good, and I should be so very, very sorry to see him spoiled and altered."

"But why should he alter?"

"Not if he is well brought up."

"By well, you mean religiously; but what makes you think Sir Antony is not religious?"

"Things that I have heard him say; not to me, perhaps, but to other people. He speaks lightly, and even scornfully of religious scruples with which he cannot sympathize, and argues against principles which I fear he does not understand. And he never seems to approve a thing because it is right, but only if it is convenient, or reasonable (as he thinks), or fashionable."

"But he is very good-natured, you will allow."

"Oh, yes; he is so naturally; but if you had a scruple or prejudice that he considered absurd, or unnecessary, I do not know how far that good-nature would tolerate it. He does not speak good-naturedly of other people; I often notice that when he makes sarcastic remarks, and that is partly why I dislike talking to him."

"Hush," said Hermione, as the subject of their conversation appeared on horseback.

He dismounted on seeing them, and approached, leading his horse.

"Paying my old house a compliment, I see," said he, addressing himself to Minna, "may I be allowed to see the result of your labours."

"Miss Percival's would repay you better; I am only a beginner," but she showed her sketch, and after making sundry complimentary observations on both drawings, Sir Antony bowed a courteous farewell, and proceeded on his ride, while the two young ladies strolled slowly homewards.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ABSENT AND PRESENT.

'Twas his own voice, she could not err,
Throughout the breathing world's extent
There was but one such voice to her
So kind, so soft, so eloquent.

TOWARDS the middle of August Minna left Guysbrooke, to pay her first visit to Rhoda, whom she had not seen since her marriage. Little Flora accompanied her aunt. She had not been well, and Margaret thought that the more bracing air of Naylehurst would be good for her.

Minna enjoyed the visit, and found much to admire in Rhoda's pretty parsonage-house, and the very picturesque common, on one side of which stood the church, surrounded by trees. Guysbrooke was not by any means to be compared with Naylehurst for beauty, and Minna smiled as she remembered Rhoda's bitter regrets when the change into Devonshire was first proposed. She remembered, too, how decidedly Rhoda had maintained that the improvement in Bessie's health would not avail to make her "quite happy," far from the place she loved, and Minna felt that her own experience of the past year proved the truth of the words spoken so long ago. Nevertheless, Minna kept all her inner life to herself, and Rhoda was charmed with her cheerful *spirits*, and readiness to please and be pleased, as well

as with her sympathy in all the cares and concerns of her household and parish; for all Rhoda's good and useful qualities were now called into play, and she was an exemplary clergyman's wife.

Mr. Thorburn was no longer too grave and reserved for Minna to understand him; now that she felt at her ease with him, she found him agreeable, and even lively sometimes; and he possessed a quiet vein of drollery, which made him often an amusing companion. Besides this, the genuine devotion to his profession, which was apparent in every circumstance of his daily life, won Minna's respect and admiration, or rather she felt that she could understand the earnest character which valued itself so humbly and its vocation so highly. Mr. Thorburn taught when he preached. His parishioners did not go home from hearing a sermon only, but from receiving a lesson suited to their understandings, their position, and their difficulties; for Mr. Thorburn had not laboured for ten years among the poor without being aware that they have many difficulties and temptations, in which the rich do not share, and of which only a long acquaintance with their poorer neighbours can give them a just idea.

Since Minna left Pentyre she had not seen a place that interested her as much as Naylehurst did, and it was with great regret that she left her sister's happy home early in October. Mr. Thorburn accompanied her and her little charge to London, and saw them safely into the train for E——, where Frank was to meet them.

The journey was uneventful. Minna was in the ladies' carriage, and little Flora was for most of the time her only companion. One or two ladies got in to

travel short distances, but they proved in no way interesting.

At length the train stopped at E——. It was much after its time, and the passengers were hurried out, as the guards appeared impatient to proceed. Minna, however, did not get out the moment the carriage-door was opened, but held Flora back, and looked anxiously at the expectant faces on the platform to discover Frank. Suddenly a gentleman advanced, and spoke to some one in the next carriage :—

"Why, you are the last person I expected to see here. Where are you bound for?"

Minna was scarcely aware she had heard the question when the answer arrested her attention, and almost stopped her breath.

"Ah! you thought I was in the East, and behold me going 'Westward, Ho!' for I am off to Madeira. I sail from P—— to-morrow morning."

"Aunt Minna, here's uncle Frank," said Flora, pulling her hand; and Frank lifted the child out of the carriage.

"How d'ye do, Minna? How many boxes have you? Just wait a minute in there, and I'll go and find them."

And, in obedience to his orders, Minna made her way through the crowd to the door of the waiting-room, and stood there to let Flora see the train start.

Oh! if that gentleman would not block up the window of the carriage in his anxiety to learn that his friend was not driven to Madeira in search of health. But, at the alarm of a false start, he moved, and Minna looked eagerly towards that window.

Lord Hazelby was leaning forward to catch a last sight of his friend, and as he threw himself back in his

seat, perhaps something else attracted his attention, for he bent forward again; but at that moment the train started in earnest, and his stranger friend passed by Minna, and joined a lady who was in the room.

"It was Hazelby," said he; "I was astonished at seeing him, and alarmed when he said he was going to Madeira; but I am happy to find it is not on his own account, but only to see his father; though he does not look well, and has been invalided home."

Frank now entered to say all was ready, and Minna was soon seated in a slow-going fly, with a long dull drive in prospect, and Frank at her side asking all sorts of questions about his old friend, Mr. Thorburn, who was as far from her mind at that moment as if she had never seen him.

But this pre-occupation did not last long. As soon as she became conscious that she was giving careless answers, she resolutely set herself to the work of the present, and just as Frank said, "There, I wont persecute you with more questions, I see you are tired," she began to give him a long account of Mr. Thorburn's schools, bestowing upon her zealous brother-in-law all the praise which Frank considered his due.

Minna found nothing changed at Guysbrooke but the colour of the leaves, which were fast becoming brown and yellow, and she missed the glorious autumn colouring in which the beeches in Kent were so rich, though perhaps the soberer brown and pale yellow of the fading elms form a better contrast to the red Devonshire soil.

Flora's improved appearance gave great satisfaction to Margaret, and Minna thought Bessie looked stronger. It seemed quite pleasant and home-like to be sitting

by her sofa again, and, but for that little scene at the railway-station, Minna would have had more heart for home chats than she had ever felt at Guysbrooke.

As it was, her sisters were well pleased at the result of the change, and delighted to have her back again. She soon made inquiries for Clarence, and heard that he was frequently Gordon's companion, and often asked when she was coming back, "and he was so delighted," said Bessie, "when I told him you were to come this evening; he is sure to come and see you to-morrow."

"And Hermione Percival has been inquiring for you," said Margaret; "and you will be glad to hear that we like her much better now. She has done wonders since you went away; actually proposed to take your class in the school, and has gone on perseveringly, which is the more to her honour, as she does not like teaching. And she has been very busy with a pleasanter task——"

"Oh, Margaret," said Bessie, "you were not to mention it."

"Is it a secret? Well, there is no harm done; Hermione can still tell it herself."

On the following morning, soon after breakfast, Hermione arrived, having in her hand a small flat parcel. After greeting Minna with genuine warmth and an affection she rarely showed, she laid on the table before her a little coloured chalk drawing of Clarence, beautifully executed, and a perfect likeness.

"There! Don't be angry with me for anticipating your labours, I have had such pleasure in doing it for you."

"Oh, it is quite lovely, and so like. How very *clever of* you; I am so much obliged, dear Hermione.

How good of you to be thinking so kindly of me while I was away; you could not have pleased me more. Look, Margaret, is it not a good likeness?"

Margaret had already seen and admired the pretty surprise that Hermione had devised, but she now added her commendations of the correct likeness, and at this moment there was a favourable opportunity of judging, for Clarence now appeared, eager to welcome his friend, as he called Minna.

He was delighted at the pleasure the picture gave her, and still more so when she thanked him for having sat so still, to enable Hermione to accomplish it. The hope of preparing an agreeable surprise for Minna had been a sufficient inducement to patience, and he now felt amply rewarded, as, instead of going off to play with the other children, he sat on Minna's lap, looking up lovingly into her face. Presently he said—

"Miss Percival, will you make a picture of my friend?"

"That would be very difficult," said Hermione; "but I wish Minna would let me try. Did you ever have your picture taken, Minna?"

"Yes; when I was much younger."

"How old? Little, like me?" inquired Clarence.

"No; older than you are. I was ten years old; but there was a little boy in the same picture, and he was not much bigger than you."

"Was it Uncle Frank?" asked Gordon.

"No; it was no uncle; a cousin called Herbert Maxwell, and his sister was in the picture, too."

"That was very nice," said Clarence. "I should like to be in the picture with you. May I, Miss Percival?"

"I am afraid I am not clever enough to manage that," said Hermione; "but I will try and draw Minna's face some day, and you shall see if it is like her."

In the afternoon, Minna went to see some of her friends among the poor people, who were honestly glad to see her again; they had missed her kind cheerful voice, and her never-varying sympathy and gentleness of manner. Hermione had indeed made it her business to look after some of Minna's especial protégés, but the business was new to her, and her shyness was, as is often the case, mistaken for pride, so she was not popular. The hearty reception she met with in most of the cottages was quite a cordial to Minna, and as she walked towards home she pondered on this and other things, and thought, "this is the sort of pleasure Rhoda so frequently enjoys. It is in her usefulness to the poor around her that she finds continual satisfaction, and perhaps this is in future to be my happiness in life; then I will try and forget the happiness I cannot have, and take this instead; be useful not only to my father, and Bessie, and the children, but to all around me, and I shall learn to like Guysbrooke, as Rhoda likes Naylehurst; and so by the time I am thirty, I shall have settled down into a quiet, demure person, almost an old maid. And my aunt—ah! I can never go back to her now. Five years at home will make me quite belong to my father's house again, and even now I feel so different, so much older, the five years might already have passed instead of not quite two. Yes, I daresay this is to be my lot. How strange and tantalizing that I should see Hazelby *yesterday*; that he should actually travel all that way

in the next carriage to me; but he has forgotten what friends we were, I daresay. He said once he never remembered what was disagreeable, and he was angry with me, so probably that would have made it a disagreeable recollection. Ah! it was better that he did not see me, for I should not have liked to meet him like only a common acquaintance; and yet it was very, very provoking to see him and hear him speak, and——. Well, Anne will see him; how happy she will be! Yes, I will think of other people's happiness, for I cannot choose my own; and if I could, I would not, lest I should choose wrong."

"Miss Raymond, is it really you, out so late? Have you forgotten that the days are shortening, or has the clearness of the evening misled you as to the hour?" Minna heartily wished she had not stayed out so late, for the speaker was no other than Sir Antony, and his way home was the same as hers.

"I am rather later than usual; but, as you say, the evening is fine enough to make one forget it is October," and she quickened her pace as she spoke.

"You have been to gladden the hearts of the cottagers, I suppose? They have been deploring your absence in most feeling terms."

"They are very grateful for little attentions," said Minna.

"Very. I had really no idea how much sense and good feeling they are capable of, till I happened to fall in one day with one of your friends, who opened a gate for me, and then 'made so bold to ask if I knew when Miss Raymond was coming back?' I could not answer the question, so in the Cornish fashion, I answered by another, and asked what he wanted you for?"

"Oh! it was a man, was it?" said Minna.

"Yes, an old man. He said his old woman was blind, and she simm'd there was nothing passed away the day like your reading to her, so the time seemed very long since you went, as he could not read."

"But I think Miss Percival went sometimes."

"Possibly, for I told her about it; but it may be that Miss Percival's presence does not quite compensate for your absence. I assure you Clarence is of that opinion, and I entirely agree with him."

The slowness and gravity with which this was uttered made it alarming, and Minna wondered what was coming next. She did not wonder long, however; and before she had recovered from the surprise and extreme vexation she felt, Sir Antony had actually asked her to be his wife, and she had to find words in which to refuse him. What words she used she scarcely knew; but they were intelligible, for Sir Antony spoke again in a low tone of great feeling, and this time he named Clarence.

This, however, had a far different effect from what he had expected.

Had anything been wanting to Minna's decision, marrying him for the sake of his child appeared to her a sort of cheat—a false action springing from a selfish motive—and she now ended the painful subject at once by a few words, the last and most audible of which was "impossible!"

Immediately on her return home, Minna informed Margaret of what had passed.

It was very unfortunate, and very annoying, just as Minna had become settled at home and happy there, and was making up her mind to a useful life at Guys-

brooke. Margaret was very sorry, and though she could not have wished for the marriage, she really pitied Sir Antony, whose affection for his child had apparently prompted him to try and promote his happiness at the same time with his own.

Sir Antony left Guysbrooke the next morning to spend the hunting season as usual in Wiltshire; but after a few weeks he went abroad again, to Mrs. Guysbrooke's great distress; and she told Minna (of whose share in this arrangement she was quite ignorant) that she had hoped now in her old age to see him settle quietly at the Park, with somebody more fit to take charge of Clarence than his old grandmother. Minna felt very sorry, and rather guilty, but still it could not be helped. She never had liked Sir Antony, and thought she never could, and she wondered very much why he liked her. Clarence was soon sent away on a visit to his mother's relations, and Minna again devoted herself to her sister's children, and to village cares.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLOUDS DISPELLED AT SUNSET.

Oh, she is true as truth itself can be!
But, ah! thou know'st her not. Would that thou couldst!
ROGERS.

Alas! we trace
The map of our own paths, and long ere years,
With their dull steps the brilliant lines efface,
On sweeps the storm, and blots them out with tears.
MRS. HEMANS.

Believe, love, endure, and be happy.
WESLEY.

IN an airy, summer-looking room, overlooking the blue Atlantic, a brother and sister were enjoying a pleasant chatty hour.

Lady Anne was on a sofa, wheeled near to the closed window. She was much altered since Minna had seen her two years ago; much taller, but more slight and delicate looking; her face fairer than ever, with nothing to relieve its paleness but the dark eyelashes, which formed a contrast to her light hair. Anne had never been called pretty, but she had now acquired some of the beauty peculiar to invalids, and the delicate transparency of her complexion often attracted glances in which pity and admiration were blended.

Joy at her brother's arrival, and happiness in his *company*, had lent brightness to her eyes, and colour

to her cheeks, and she talked with great animation now that she had him at last, all to herself, as his first day had been almost entirely devoted to his father.

The sea voyage had done much for Lord Hazelby, and his friend at E—— station would now have been better satisfied with his appearance. He was at present chiefly occupied in answering questions, first about himself, then about Beatrice, and lastly, "Oh, and you never told me, did you see Minna?"

"Minna! where could I have seen her?"

"I hoped you would somehow; I don't know where. But I forgot; of course she was in Devonshire when you were in London."

"Devonshire! I thought Mr. Raymond lived in Kent."

"They did once, but not since Minna went home."

"Then I believe I saw her."

"You believe!" cried Anne. "Do you mean to say you did not speak to her. Oh, Hazelby, how very unforgiving."

"Anne, you do not know what you are saying. I could not speak to her even if she or I had wished it. I was in the train, and only just as it went off I fancied I saw somebody like her on the platform."

"Oh, how very provoking. Were not you vexed? I did so wish you could see her: I want to hear that she is just the same—well, and happy, and bright, as she used to be; and somehow I doubt about it."

"Why should you doubt? She is very fond of her home, I suppose, or she would have gone with Honoria."

"You do not understand Minna. It is the only thing in which you are dull, Hazelby."

"Thank you; but you see I have never applied my mind to the difficult task of understanding Miss Raymond."

"Then I wish you would."

"But I have no opportunity at present."

"I could help you, if you would only listen to me."

"Speak; I am bound to hear."

"Now, do not quote Shakespeare, but answer me. Did you not like Minna in old times at Pentyre?"

"Am I upon oath?"

"Oh, Hazelby!"

"Well, I did like her."

"Yes. I mean before I knew her."

"And after, too, if you please. I liked her for being so kind to you."

"I am glad you have some gratitude; and you may well be grateful for that, if you care the least about me, Hazelby; for I assure you it is to her that I owe all my happiness. I don't mean the being with her only, though I was very happy then; but Minna taught me how to be happy; she was the first person who made me see that my lameness was not a misery; that it need scarcely be a misfortune; that it was God's decree, and was the lot He saw best for me, and that He meant me to be happy, notwithstanding."

"But it was not so easy, I fear," said Hazelby, kindly.

"Yes; when I knew the way; when I saw how I ought to think of it. And then I began to find out how kind people were, and how much they felt for me, when I used to think nobody cared; and this made me learn gratitude, and I think it is such a *happy* feeling. People had often talked to me about

being contented, but I fancied it was because they could not understand what I had to bear. The first person who made me think people that had something to bear were really contented, was Captain Raymond, whom I met in Italy, when I was a little girl; and he told me about his little sister, who was ill, and that made me anxious to know Minna; and then she helped me. And when she went away from all she loved so very, very much, to go and take care of her invalid sister, I knew then how really and deeply she did feel for others, and that she was ready to give up her own great happiness for those who had less."

Anne ceased speaking, and looked at her brother.

"You are sure that was her reason for leaving, Honoria."

"Certain. I knew more about it than anybody."

"How?"

"We had talked it over before." And Anne gave him the account of her conversations with Minna on the subject.

"Why did you let me go without knowing it; and why did she?"

"She had not told Honoria. Could she tell you first, or could I, without her permission? Besides, she was to meet you again at Beatrice's wedding."

"And she never came."

"Because her sister was ill."

"But, Anne, you forget, as she forgot, the disappointment it was to my sister, and to all of us."

"And was it none to her, do you think? It was a very bitter trial to her, I know; but she did what she felt was her duty, and you ought to admire her for it."

"Then if she cared so much as you think, she must have been very unhappy."

"That is what I fear. She writes cheerfully always, except when it is about other people's troubles; and she has had many to grieve over; and when you were wounded, and we were all so wretched about you, she wrote to me so kindly. Oh! I cannot tell you what I would give to see her again and to see her happy. I think she must feel desolate now we are all so far away, and Honoria gone, and all the children, from Pentyre."

"Well, when we go to England, you must ask her to come and see us."

"And you are not vexed with her now?"

"How can I be vexed if she has done you so much good," said he, with a bright, kind look in his brown eyes; "and I own I was wrong. But, Anne, I will tell you a secret. I valued her friendship almost as you did, till I thought she undervalued mine; and then I was so hurt and disappointed that my very feeling for her made me unjust."

"Thank you, dear Hazelby," said Anne, with tears in her eyes; "I understand you now."

"And some day you will help me to make Minna understand, too," said he, smiling.

But this task was not for Anne. A few months after this conversation, the obituary in the *Times* contained the following announcement:—

"Died, at Madeira, the Lady Anne Constance Arlington, youngest daughter of the Earl of St. Melion, in her eighteenth year."

Anne had never seen Minna again since their parting at Pentyre; thus the great hope of the last two years was unfulfilled, and Minna shed many tears over

the kind letter she received from Lady St. Melion, containing Anne's last messages, in one of which was a regret that she had never made acquaintance with Bessie—another ungratified, innocent wish.

Lady St. Melion evidently felt most keenly the loss of her little daughter, whose acquired gentleness had won all hearts around her; and now her feelings towards Minna partook of the tenderness with which Anne had regarded her, and she expressed in affectionate terms a hope of seeing her on returning to England in the spring.

It was the first time that Lady St. Melion had really acknowledged the warm friendship between Anne and Minna; so the letter, sad though it was, was in some degree soothing.

Her thoughts quickly turned to her dear aunt, Lady Fortrose, who would, she knew, be deeply grieved, and Minna again felt that her own sorrow was second to that of others.

Her work was still before her—the work of patience and usefulness she had found at Guysbrooke.

There was a terrible gap in the list of friends that memory had so loved to recal; and often when letters came, she longed that she could once more see Anne's handwriting. But Bessie's sympathy was not now refused; and to her Minna turned oftener for companionship than she had formerly done, and found peace and even happiness—not such happiness, indeed, as she once had known—that could not return, and would not have suited her more educated character; something more hardly earned, and therefore more real, more lasting.

The happiness that comes when we have made our

life our own, by an earnest putting forth of strength to fight its battle, and endure its griefs, and when seeing the encroaching floods of discontent and misery ready to surround us, we have raised against them the sure barrier of faith, made hope our anchor both for this world and the next, and placed our joyful trust in the Everlasting Love, which hath done all things well.

THE END.

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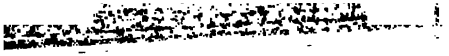
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